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VIVID SEKT **MODERN DELUSION** **MOTH**
RAGANA **CONQUEST FOR DEATH**
THE STOPS **RATS BLOOD** **TYVEK**

OCTOBER 15
ISSUE 389
$4.99

MAXIMUMROCKNROLL

TOP 10

For what it's worth, here're some of the MRR reviewers' current Top 10 (or so) things we've reviewed this month.

GRACE AMBROSE

- IVY – A Cat's Cause, No Dogs Problem EP
- CONFLICT – Last Hour LP
- VEXX/BIG ZIT/CCTV – live
- MYSTIC INANE – live
- SPRAY PAINT – Punters On A Barge LP
- REATARDS – Grown Up, Fucked Up LP
- URANIUM CLUB – Human Exploration 12"
- VACANT LIFE – Pain Compliance EP
- SODS – 7" / MODERNETTES – 12"
- HEY HALLWAYS – 12" / NEGATIVE SCANNER – LP

LYDIA ATHANASOPOULOU

- CRACKED COP SKULLS – Every Stone I Throw EP
- LASTSENTENCE / VOCO PROTESTA – split EP
- FM BATS – Do Unto Others… EP / AJAX – Priced EP
- DISCLOSE – both LPs
- ZONE INFINIE – LP / SOCIALITE – "I See You/I Don't Care"
- SODS – "Television Sect/Military Madness"
- TENTÁCULO – Tiro En La Sien EP
- NIET – Srečna Mladina LP
- EXEK / SPRAY PAINT — split EP / NERVOSAS – LP
- UNFIT SCUM / VIHARIKOS – split LP

MATT BADENHOP

- VEXX – live
- PERMANENT RUIN – live
- NERVOSAS – LP
- ZONE INFINIE – LP
- NIET – Srečna Mladina LP
- CONFLICT – Last Hour LP
- STEREOTYPIA – Kauniit Ja Rohkeat EP
- RADIOACTIVITY – Silent Kill LP
- SODS – "Television Sect/Military Madness"
- TENTÁCULO – Tiro En La Sien EP

WILL BLOMQUIST

- DISCLOSE – both LPs
- NERVOSAS – LP / ZONE INFINIE – LP
- DECADES/FAILURES – LP
- RADIOACTIVITY – Silent Kill LP
- LASTSENTENCE / VOCO PROTESTA – split EP
- RENNY WILSON – LP / EASTER AND THE TOTEM – LP
- HEY HALLWAYS – Absence Makes the Heart Forget 12"
- NEGATIVE SCANNER – LP
- DISGUISE – Signs of the Future LP
- HELLMAISTROZ – 10" / NIET – Srečna Mladina LP

MITCH CARDWELL

Vacation, all he ever wanted.

ROBERT COLLINS

- SPM – demo / OTDEL SAMOISKORENENIA – 2xCD
- SEEIN' RED – Riot EP
- LIMBS BIN/SIDETRACKED – split CS
- UNFIT SCUM / VIHARIKOS – split LP
- MYSTIC INANE – live
- VOCO PROTESTA/LASTSENTENCE – split EP
- DISGUISE – Signs of the Future LP
- YURODIVIYE – demo / DEAFKIDS – The Upper Hand LP
- FAST ASLEEP – live / VEXX – live
- EMASCULATOR – demo

LAYLA GIBBON

- VEXX/MYSTIC INANE – live
- IVY – A Cat's Cause, No Dog's Problem EP
- SPRAY PAINT – Punters On A Barge LP
- REATARDS – Grown Up, Fucked Up LP
- SODS – "Television Sect/Military Madness"
- SEWERS – Weight LP / URANIUM CLUB – 12"
- HURRY UP – LP / MODERNETTES – Teen City 12"
- STRASBOURG – Fruit De La Passion LP
- CONFLICT – Last Hour LP / V/A – We're Loud 2XLP
- EASTER AND THE TOTEM – LP

DAN GOETZ

- CONFLICT – Last Hour LP
- VEXX/MYSTIC INANE – live
- G.L.O.S.S/BIG ZIT/OOZE – live
- AJAX – Priced EP
- IVY – A Cat's Cause, No Dog's Problem EP
- DECADES/FAILURES – LP
- DISGUISE – Signs of the Future LP
- HAPPY? – Anger EP
- SPRAY PAINT – Punters on a Barge LP
- NO PROBLEM – Kid Killer EP

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TOP 10

Please send two copies of vinyl, CD-only, or demo releases to the address on the previous page

GREG HARVESTER

- VEXX – live
- BIG ZIT/CCTV – live
- DIVERS – Hello Hello LP
- HEY HALLWAYS – Absence Makes the Heart Forget 12"
- NERVOSAS – LP
- SUNSICK – CS
- Human Exploration 12"
- SPRAY PAINT – Punters On A Barge LP
- G.L.O.S.S. – live
- MAMA – Night Shoot 2x7"

KENNY KAOS

Vacation, had to get away.

CAROLYN KEDDY

- IVY – A Cat's Cause, No Dogs Problem EP
- EXEK / SPRAY PAINT — split EP
- NEGATIVE SCANNER – LP / HURRY UP – LP
- DEAFKIDS – The Upper Hand LP
- SPRAY PAINT – Punters On A Barge LP
- RADIOACTIVITY – LP / V/A – We're Loud 2XLP
- THE JACK BENNIES – Chopping Down the Weeds LP
- SODS – "Television Sect/Military Madness"
- THE NO-TALENTS/QUAALUDES – live
- REATARDS – Grown Up, Fucked Up LP

RAY LUJAN

- DIVERS – Hello Hello LP
- EASTER AND THE TOTEM – LP
- THE FLATLINERS – Division of Spoils CD
- HEY HALLWAYS – Absence Makes the Heart Forget 12"
- MODERNETTES – Teen City 12"
- RADIOACTIVITY – LP /URANIUM CLUB – 12"
- LYDIA LUNCH RETROVIRUS – live
- ROYAL HEADACHE – live
- WEIRDOS – live
- STIFF LITTLE FINGERS – live

ROTTEN RON READY

- GINO & THE GOONS – Push Your Luck EP
- DISCLOSE – both LPs
- DETROIT 442 – Pig$ LP
- IVY – A Cat's Cause, No Dogs Problem EP
- NERVOUS MOTHERS – Nest EP
- TENTÁCULO – Tiro En La Sien EP
- SEEIN' RED – Riot EP
- VACANT LIFE – Pain Compliance EP
- MODERNETTES – Teen City 12"
- CRACKED COP SKULLS - Every Stone I Throw EP

FRED SCHRUNK

- RADIOACTIVITY – Silent Kill LP
- MODERNETTES – Teen City 12"
- NIET – Srečna Mladina LP
- NERVOSAS – LP
- HEY HALLWAYS – Absence Makes the Heart Forget 12"
- CONFLICT – Last Hour LP
- URANIUM CLUB – Human Exploration 12"
- IVY – A Cat's Cause, No Dogs Problem EP
- GINO & THE GOONS – Push Your Luck EP
- VACANT LIFE – Pain Compliance EP

LENA TAHMASSIAN

- OTDEL SAMOISKORENENIA – 2xCD
- STRASBOURG — Fruit De La Passion LP
- HEY HALLWAYS – Absence Makes the Heart Forget 12"
- STEREOTYPIA – Kauniit Ja Rohkeat EP
- HURRY UP – LP
- SODS – Television Sect/Military Madness
- SEWERS – Weight LP
- JUANITA Y LOS FEOS - live
- TOTAL CONTROL - live
- COMPOSITE – live

ELI WALD

- BIG ZIT / VEXX / CCTV – live
- MYSTIC INANE – live
- IVY – A Cat's Cause, No Dogs Problem EP
- NEGATIVE SCANNER - LP
- URANIUM CLUB – Human Exploration 12"
- VACANT LIFE – Pain Compliance EP
- SPRAY PAINT – Punters On A Barge LP
- AJAX – Priced EP
- STRASBOURG — Fruit De La Passion LP
- ZERO – "All Seeing Eyes/Paradox"

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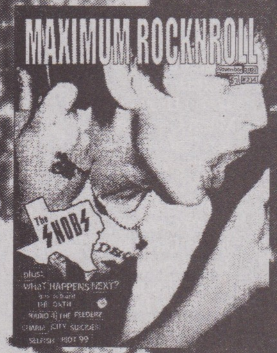
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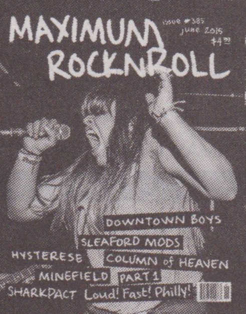
The SNOBS
plus:
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
THE OATH
RADIO 4
FEEDERZ
CHARM CITY SUICIDES
SELFISH
RIOT 99

MRR #234/Nov '02.

If you want more of the international adventures you saw in this month's **CONQUEST FOR DEATH** tour diary, you may dig this writeup of the **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? Brazilian tour**. Also: The Snobs, The Oath, Radio 4, Feederz, Charm City Suicides, Selfish, Riot 99, End On End, Peawees, Born/Dead.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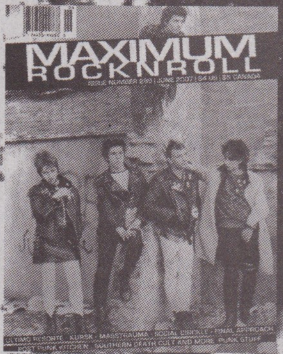
DOWNTOWN BOYS
SLEAFORD MODS
HYSTERESE
COLUMN of HEAVEN
MINEFIELD
PART 1
SHARKPACT
Loud! Fast! Philly!

MRR #385/Mar '15

Providence's DOWNTOWN BOYS, anarcho legends PART 1, Germany's HYSTERESE, COLUMN OF HEAVEN from Toronto, England's SLEAFORD MODS, Russia's MINEFIELD, SHARKPACT, Loud! Fast! Philly! and photo spreads from Damaged City Fest and London's Bentfest.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MRR #289/June '07.

Scene report out of **MOTH's very own Copenhagen,** as well as Ultimo Resorte, Kursk, Masstrauma, Social Circkle, Final Approach, Post Punk Kitchen, Southern Death Cult, Portland Drummers, Timisoara, and a Pampanga scene report.

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JULY 2015
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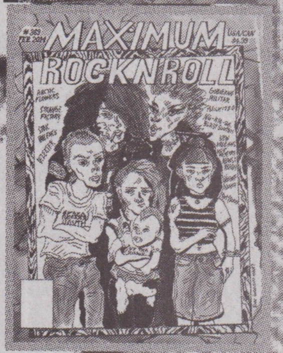
FLESH WORLD
HOMELESS RECORDS
THE SLITS: HERE TO BE HEARD
SIERPIEN
THE WRECKS
PISS TEST
BITCH SCHOOL
YDI
LONDON SCENE REPORT

MRR #386/Jul '15

FLESH WORLD from San Francisco, Portland's PISS TEST, Philly's YDI, Reno's WRECKS, Here to Be Heard: The Story of the Slits documentary, PDX rockers BITCH SCHOOL, Russian post-punkers SIERPIEN, Australia's Homeless Records, photos from our worldwide MRR Presents shows in May 2015, and London scene report.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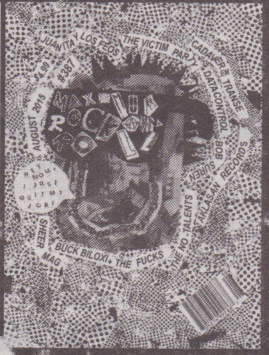
MRR #369/Feb '14.

Check out our interview with **VIVID SEKT antecedents ARTIC FLOWERS**, then peep: Polish legends Dezerter, Japan's Strange Factory, Poliskitzo from L.A., Spain's Gobierno Militar, Stoic Violence, Voigh-Kampff, Nü-Klē-Ər Blast Suntan, and David West of Rank/Xerox and Rat Columns. Cover art by Leah Wishnia.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#387
JUANITA Y LOS FEOS
THE VICTIM PARTY
CADAVER EM TRANSE
DATA CONTROL
SHEER MAG
BUCK BILOXI & THE FUCKS
THE NO-TALENTS

MRR #387/Aug '15

SHEER MAG from Philadelphia, São Paolo's CADAVER EM TRANSE, Madrid's JUANITA Y LOS FEOS, the singular mind behind BUCK BILOXI AND THE FUCKS / GIORGIO MURDERER, France's reunited NO-TALENTS, Stockholm's DATA CONTROL, and reflections on growing older in punk from Bob Suren and the VICTIM PARTY, plus photos from Boston's Smash It Dead fest.

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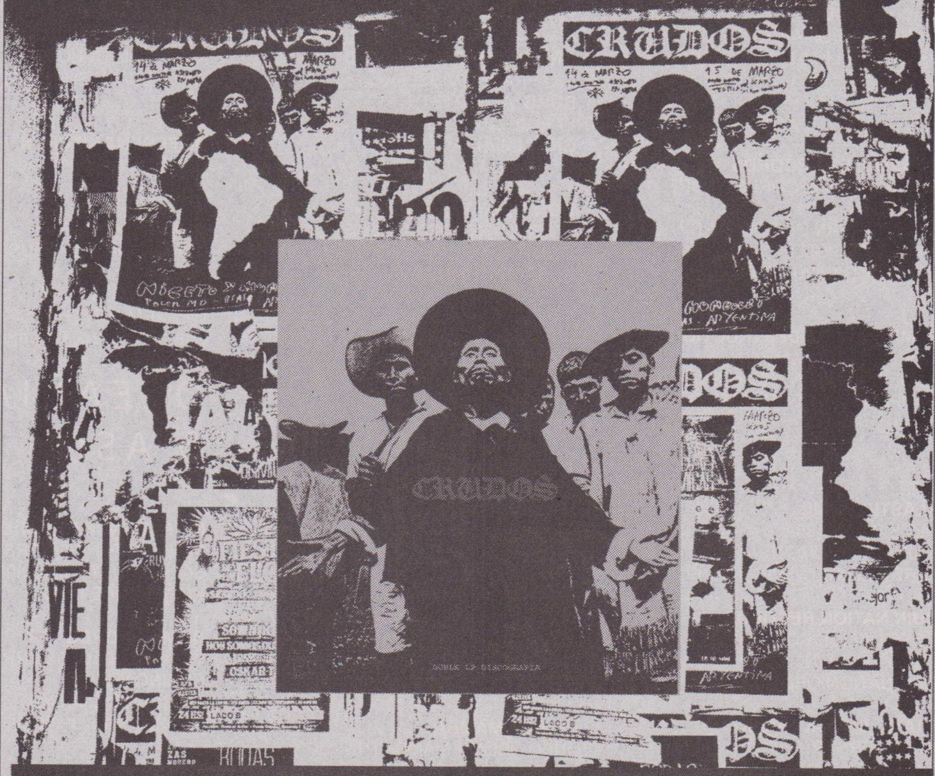

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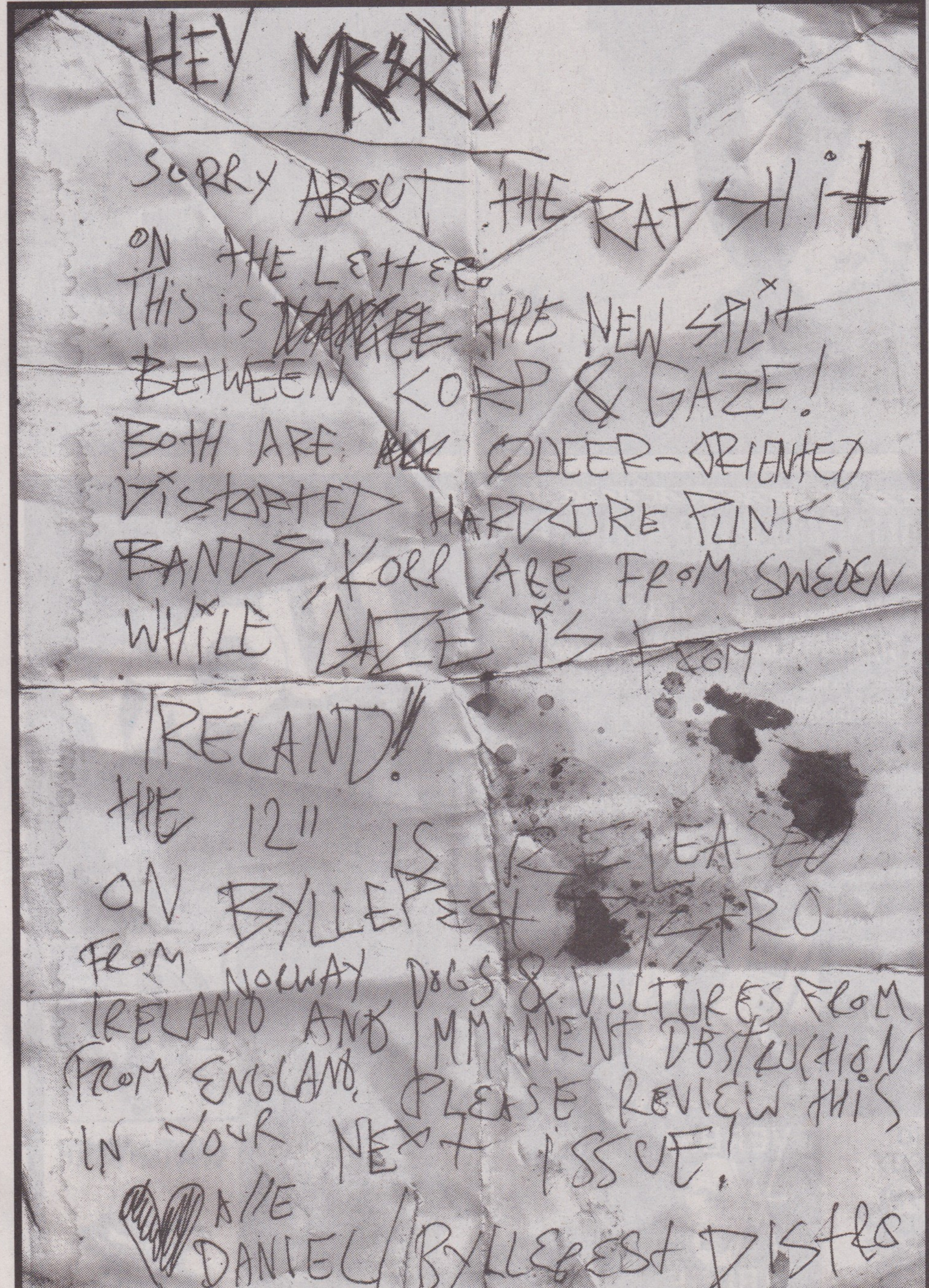

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Still living the chaos here at Maximum Rocknroll, *rat shit and all. A few things:*

LOS CRUDOS 2XLP: *We've got 20 copies left of the black vinyl version and when they're gone, they're gone. Keep your eyes peeled on the webstore—we just unearthed some of the limited edition colored vinyl versions which will go up for all you collector scum very soon.*

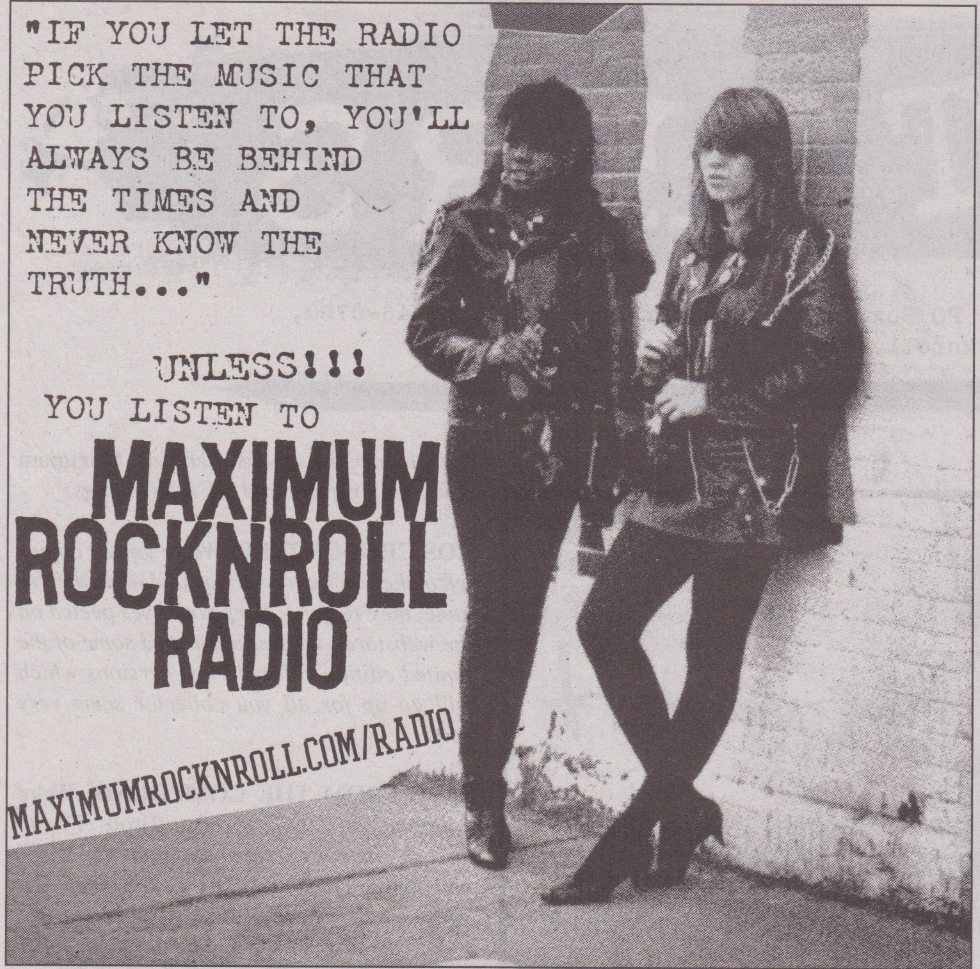
LIVE FROM THE COMPOUND: *We're collaborating with PressureDrop TV to stream some live sessions from the* MRR *compound. Think of it like the radio show, but with visuals. The Bay Area's Cold Beat will record the first session on Monday, September 28th. See PressureDrop.tv for more info!*

FEST FEVER: *We went to Olympia Hardcore Fest and had a great time. Now we want a piece of the action.* MRR *fest is in the works. Keep your ear to the ground: fest@maximumrocknroll.com to stay in the loop.*

CAN YOU EVEN READ? *Long-in-the-works book project is coming to fruition. Martin and George are almost done scanning all of the images from our vast photo archive. It's wild in there! I found a photo of Dag Nasty where Peter Cortner is wearing Dag Nasty sweatpants! The first HC band to make their own jock merch? Not who I would have guessed.*

We've got a lot of treasures ourselves but we're looking for more. Do you have Maximum *ephemera from the '80s and '90s in your personal collection? Recordings of the radio show, letters sent to or from the mag, flyers from zine affiliated shows, articles from other publications about this one? We wanna see it all! Email mrr@maximumrocknroll.com with scans or questions.*

THEY DON'T GET PAID...: *Still looking for another coordinator to enter the fray with us. Get in touch for an application: mrr@maximumrocknroll.com.*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COLUMNS

EAT, PRAY, SHLUB.
STUPID PARTY
COLIN ATROPHY

Travis Fristoe is dead. I've re-written that sentence so many times now. *My friend Travis is dead. Travis Fristoe died. My friend Travis killed himself.* None of them were right and that one isn't either but the cold neutrality of it is the closest to appropriate I've got. Travis is someone who I only knew for a few years, but whose influence on my life is ongoing and impossible to quantify. I think he had that sort of impact on a lot of us.

I don't want my voice to be prominent in the narrative about his life and death. In fact, I wasn't going to write anything. But last Sunday in Brooklyn there was a potluck for friends of his to get together and share memories. I had known he'd been dead for two days by then but hadn't really cried. I hadn't been able to. The potluck was nice, but it wasn't until most of the guests had left and I was sitting around the table with a few close friends that I was able to truly access my emotions and really let it all out. Afterwards I felt spent and exhausted.

When I got in the car to head home, there were two guys on Hot 97, NYC's premier rap radio station, talking about the passing of Sean Price, an MC from Brownsville who had just died unexpectedly. He hadn't been a prominent figure in the eyes of people outside the rap world, but he'd been grinding since the mid '90s and it seemed like, without ever really taking too much shine for himself, he had affected many people in that community. In between Sean Price tracks spanning his entire catalog, the DJs talked and took calls from other people who were reeling from his loss, acknowledging that *as a community* they may have taken this fixture for granted, because it hadn't occurred to them that he might be gone one day.

I sat in my car for almost an hour after I parked listening to them. A foundation of Travis and my friendship was discussing rap minutiae. In fact, there's an idea that has come to define much of what I do that was first workshopped in a conversation I had with Travis in a park in Greenpoint. We were talking about posse cuts, when a rapper invites all their friends on a song with them. Think "Scenario," "Sippin on Some Syrup," or more recently maybe the "I'm A Coke Boy Remix," though frankly Chinx Drugz's verse on the original is way better. Point is, we were talking about how punks can't do posse cuts because it just doesn't work and yeah maybe you can have a split 7" or whatever but there's really something so special about that kind of public declaration of allegiance and friendship. When I was like, "I guess *Slice Harvester* is kind of my ongoing posse cut, isn't it?" Travis understood what I was talking about. Our conversation drifted back to the radio rap we were excited about, I don't remember what else we talked about and soon Travis had to go to dinner. But that moment was galvanizing for me. It coalesced so many vague ideas I'd had into one crisp and succinct concept. It's unlikely I would've had such a revelation in conversation with someone else.

So two nights after Travis' death it felt appropriate that I was sitting in my car listening to these strangers on the rap station mourn their lost friend. This moment of intense vulnerability, played out for everyone to see, got me thinking about the nature of public grief and how we mourn public figures. Travis spent his life making things to share with people, and in the time since his death it's been uplifting to see how far reaching his influence has been. I just want to add my voice to the throng of his friends and fans.

I first met Travis when a band I was driving on tour stayed at his house in Gainesville. I got wasted on Jim Beam in his driveway while we all told stories and at some point we realized that my old band, Gloryhole, had played our first show with his old band, Reactionary 3, at the Jerk Haus in Sunset Park many years prior. Eventually I passed out, woke up, drove off.

At the time I was just getting started reviewing pizza and I had a donation button on my website soliciting readers to pay for a slice. When I got home from tour I noticed that Travis had donated $20. A hugely generous gesture! I mailed him the first issue of *Slice Harvester*, he sent me a letter back and an issue of his zine, *America?*, and our friendship grew from there.

The night I met Travis, I had just started drinking again after three months off booze and I'm sure I talked about that incessantly. Like many drunks, the twilight of my alcoholism was spent having drunken conversations acknowledging my substance abuse problems that I forgot in the morning. As we got to know each other, I was struggling with quitting drinking for good, and Travis was someone who was always willing to listen and engage when I wanted to talk about the dark stuff. I found his perspectives grounding and his insights perceptive and helpful.

Occasionally I'd get a call or a text that he was going to be in New York. Inevitably we'd meet at a library, then walk to a park where we would talk for hours about how our lives were going, why it was so vital to care about punk, projects we were working on. Travis was an inspiration to me and someone who I thought about at moments when I doubted myself, or doubted the purpose of investing all my time and energy into a group of people who, at worst, are just a bunch of jerks who vaguely like the same music. He could always help me see the bigger picture, remind me why it's important to build community, remind me why we have to define ourselves in terms of what we believe in rather than just what we stand against.

I'll leave you with a few paragraphs from the intro to *America?* #15, which have always stood out to me:

"At the library last month I was thanked by another unfamiliar face who swears I let him in for free to a late-night show at Wayward where he got to play an Irish band's drums. '*I was wasted as hell, man, but I remember you being nice.*' Again, I don't remember. Will what is everyday to us eventually add to something larger?

"Opening your living space means maybe your favorite coffee mug ('*skinny people have big hearts*') may disappear with a giggling New College student who's wasted on DIY absinthe. Or having a band you don't know spill their drink on your Glen E. Friedman book. A very small price to pay still.

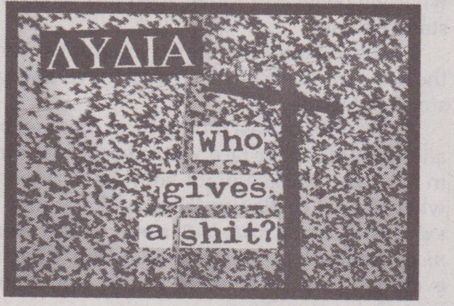
"Similarly, in the ongoing efforts to '*clean your room—change your life,*' you will likely unearth strange and incriminating personal artifacts. How did I get this demo CD of this album? Why is this letter still on my desk & not mailed out? The cleaning up kicks up my allergies. Metaphors are no longer needed—the days provide all the examples we need. Do not become an isolated archivist. Do not let the silverfish take over.

"Outside Bentonville, near my grandparent's home, I wasn't expecting to find Yoko Ono LPs & Octavia Butler hardbacks in the local thrift stores. Or the clippings in my great grandmother's scrapbook (a pasted-over mechanic's manual) or distant relatives: an untrained librarian, a small-town bicycle racer. The suicide notices ran a close second to the marriage announcements. Such oversights can become a dangerous fallacy.

"By dangerous I mean *limiting*. As in discounting the possibilities of where we came from, where we are now, and what we should do next. The quotidian and civilian world will always be there to fall back on. In the meantime let's act like what we do matters."

I know there's something to be said about the people who seem the most sane, who seem the most stable, are sometimes the most deeply troubled. I know there's something to learn from the fact that this person who is and was an inspiration to so many chose to end his own life on a Friday afternoon in August. But I'm not sure I have the distance yet to think about this death in any terms other than grief.

An email that I wrote to Travis two years ago began, *"I'm getting ready for work so I can't write a long email but I was just thinking wistfully about how great you are and how glad I am that you're in the world."* It wasn't infrequently that I thought of Travis and was filled with inspiration and gratitude. Now I feel his absence and I see his absence reflected in so many people around me. It hurts and when I think about him I feel as if I've been hollowed out and packed full with TV static. But at the end of the day this pain I'm feeling, that the people around me are feeling, is the cost of having made ourselves vulnerable enough to care for a wonderful person, and having been cared for back. A small price to pay still.



Pasión es la única cosa que importa

Pfwaaaar, what a couple months! I think I may have started my last column like that but I've had one hell of a time since then. Very quickly thought, the update on Greece is we've now had two elections *and* a referendum in one year; so how's that for democracy? Ha ha ha ha ha ha! OK, what else is new? Well, let me backtrack for a minute.

In June I went to LA for the very first time—crazy I know. People back home are going "Wait, don't you go all the time..?" If you consider, though, that it took me the better part of 2.5 years to cross the bloody Golden Gate bridge (yeah, the big red one that gets blown up in movies), then it's no surprise it took me this long to get to LA. I had a fucking great time, and here's why.

My good friend Jay Bay Rigas, whom you may have come across in these pages, was flying to LA for the Solo Para Punx festival. We had discussed it way back in March, but kinda didn't think I was going to make it, what with then being rather broke and still not knowing where I would be living etc. The months went by, I managed to not blow *all* my money on beer and drugs and records, and bought a ticket for not one but two festivals!

I knew Berserktown fest was happening in August, and *really* wanted to see No Hope for the Kids and Total Control (and Dead Moon but alas it didn't work out for us) but I knew that Solo Para Punx was really not to be missed! The LA sound and scene have been strong for some time and if anything, they're a reason for me to still be stoked on punk. Now, I'm not really a "festie" but I felt a bit like one this year and yes, for a fest newb like me, it was hella fun!

On Friday a carload of us headed out, Ben New Flesh / Apriori at the wheel. Quick side note: Ben also does a neat mixtape project with international punk comps—write to him at commoditytapes@gmail.com for info! So Ben has—or shall I say had?—an his epically beaten up Toyota Corolla, one of those '90s models that are built like tanks, which had one back seat window completely smashed out—it was the purest form of air conditioning. As we rode through hills and hills of nothing but golden fields, the racing wind outside drowning out any of the sounds coming from the radio, me trying to think of *one* song that referenced those fields but failing, I thought to myself, "I really need to figure out where the hell I'm going…" Who gives a shit, right? I know. Maybe it was the sun glaring on the back of my head and neck, slowly frying my cells to a breakable crisp. Maybe it was the heat slowing my thoughts down, or the repetitive scenery messing with the concept of time. Something shifted and in the back of that sun-drenched I traced my trajectory, studied my patterns and tried to calculate velocity and direction. Sometimes we go in circles chasing our own tales. Perhaps I finally needed to slow down to catch up with myself.

As we started the up-hill climb of the Grapevine, we laughed at the various horror stories we'd heard about people getting stuck on it, breaking down, having to get towed... As we approached the top—close enough to the tipping point we could almost see the road go downhill—the car started making funny noises. Ben said the gearbox is acting funny, so we pulled into a shoulder that was thankfully just up ahead and, as we did, we drove over a giant rock. *Thunck!* Yikes, that didn't sound too good. We stopped the car, got out, doors all open, hands on hips, and inspected the damage. Ben hopped back in, started it up, put it into Drive, nothing. Reverse, nothing. He put it back into Park, hopped out. *Fuck!* What were we going to do? We called a tow truck, pee and shuffled our feet in the dusty gravel. What if the car didn't make it? We're still about two hours from LA proper! The show had probably already started and… *fuck the car was rolling backwards!* We all froze for a second, then I ran to the driver's seat, slid in and yanked the hand brake up as hard as I could. The car skidded on the dirt for a second, then halted. Behind me, no more than five feet away, giant FedEx Freight trucks are storming by at 80 mph, the ground rumbling every time one careens on up the hill.

Eventually the tow truck came, scooped us all up and took us a few miles down the road to the tire shop. The car was shot; it would be cheaper to scrap it than get it repaired. So, after Ben decided it had had a good run, and mounting the Grapevine was a fine enough final voyage, we sat in its open windows guzzling beer, waiting for our savior to arrive as the stars and a thin, bright moon rose steadily above the truck stop, somewhere 60 miles outside of LA.

The first night of the fest took place at a tire shop in Compton—wicked! I can't remember the last time I went to an outdoor show; I like outdoor shows! We had some difficulty finding it at first, but fully appreciated this element of the space and when inside, famished and thirsty, we jumped with joy at the sight of $1 tacos and $1 beers—smart thinking! The bands were set up on the ground and the energy or beat never let up the whole night. The people were dancing, singing along, hugging, making out, everyone was really friendly and chatty...I felt a bit like I was a teenager again. It was like being welcomed into a big party or reunion where everyone seems hella happy to be there. And I think they were; not because for them it was the festival of the year, as it was for me, but because for them it's their home, their homies. And that to me is really cool.

Later that night, after the show, my usually-pretty-damn-sober friend Jason requested I get him drunk *and* high on our hotel balcony which overlooked LA's Chinatown…As a veteran degenerate since my teens, I was more than happy to oblige and we stayed up talking and giggling until the sun crept over the hills at dawn. To everyone's surprise, all four beers and both joints (you gotta build the tolerance) did not affect him at all! Blimey what a first day!

My friend and old *MRR* roommate Danny lives in LA now. She is a most excellent chef and wonderful human being, so we made plans to visit her at the restaurant she works at, called Status Kuo, a place frequented by people who take their shoes off while eating and who speak of threesomes, power yoga, plastic surgery and chia seeds all in one fucking breath. Right, this *is* LA after all.

Hippie lizards aside, it was lovely to see Danny again, a woman after my own heart, and have some of her delicious food! Green salad with pear, finger-lickin' good fried chicken and iced coffee suitable for direct intravenous consumption. Also, she hooked us up with croissants and blueberries—how fantastic! Afterwards we popped round the corner to a cozy-looking record store (I swear I can't remember the name or find my receipt), which was musty smelling, with new and used selections of all kinds, but not so much punk. Fine with me, because I scored something purely based on how cool it looked: *Hello Baby* by Ruth Etting "the Recording Sweetheart," with recordings from 1926 to 1931. Charming soft pink cover with the sweetheart posing mischievously in the center.

The beach was our next destination and damn if it wasn't a quintessential SoCal beach: palm trees, people roller blading, fit families who looked like Tommy Hilfiger models (blech!), surfers with their wild beach hair and freckled noses…A beautiful beach but not my crowd really, not as buff or self-important as I like my stereotypes.

After the first day, which was a thrill for both me, who'd never been to LA, and Jason, who's just in love with California, we didn't think the second venue could top the experience. Boy, were we happy to be proven wrong! We drove through and under the LA skyline, heading northeast to the Poor Kid's Mansion, which is exactly what it sounds like and it's awesome! You drive up a cul-de-sac, then walk down a driveway that leads to a giant backyard / natural balcony. To your right looms the house, surrounded by apple and palm trees, the LA skyline hovering in the near distance. Well stuffed on a roadside burrito and slightly sun-stuck, I lay down on the grassy slope and absorbed the sights, sounds and smells. Hummingbirds darted around above our heads, a barbeque was going strong, groups of punx were laughing, waving at friends and teasing each other—all of them looking very stylish, I must add. Something about the intimacy amongst the members of the crowd and bands just put me at ease. For Ausencia I sat to the side of the small stage and the sight was just magical. Everyone was up front, singing along passionately, the shivers almost visible as they rippled through the crowd. Catchy riffs, sing-along choruses, melancholic vocals and infectious hooks—best band; their EP is already on my Year End Top Ten list! I was humbled and inspired, and very glad that this was my introduction to LA. Props to the punx who organized it, I look forward to next year! Other highlights include Tozcos, Fundamental, Sadicos, Drapetomania, Damages, Fumigados, and Mutant Itch.

I had heard so many things about LA, and been exposed to so many of its images via the media growing up, that I was actually prepared to hate it. I still don't think I could live there (car central, yo) but I liked it so much I was already ecstatic to be going back in August. But more on that next month…

On our last day there we visited Amoeba Records (loved the themed 7" boxes, had to resist emptying a couple of those) and then did what is probably the most LA thing you could do: we took a stroll down the walk of fame! It spans like fifteen fucking blocks; it's no joke how many mediocre people get their names onto those pavements! I kept my eyes to the ground while trying not to bump into Samuel Jackson from *Pulp Fiction* or Spiderman or pirate Johnny Depp, and hunted for a good star to pose next to. I found Ella Fitzgerald, Dolly Parton, Mahalia Jackson, Ingrid Bergman and Jean Harlow, all ladies I love!

After that I had the pleasure of meeting the lovely people from Generacion Suicida! They treated us to 40s and we hung out in their back yard jamming Pura Manía and playing with their two friendly pitbulls. They were all extremely nice, which made it extra hard to leave when we had to move on with our night. We met Danny for drinks after she got off work and, as a food service / fine dining industry insider, she knows where the good drinks are at! We took an elevator to the thirteenth floor, then another elevator to the fifteenth floor (not before posing for a cheeky pic with plush flowers on posh furniture in the lobby) and *then* we got to the main rooftop bar, called Perch. Dark wooden surfaces and stained glass, big leather couches and soft lighting. Super. Outside was equally dreamy, with fairy lights and lots of big, leafy plants. The night was too warm to sit inside but outside was packed. "Why not walk to the rooftop bar?" I thought this was the rooftop bar. No, in LA you have a rooftop bar *on top* of another rooftop bar. What the fuck, yes we wanna go up there! And lo and behold, on my last night in LA I was sitting right inside the city skyline, kind of stunned by this flashy concept, this glitzy experience that so eluded me in Greece where such sights (and heights) are only seen in movies and on postcards. "What can I say, living it up in LA…" as Jay Bay would say.

The next morning we said our goodbyes to Jason and got the Bolt bus back home. For the record, they are air-conditioned, have free wi-fi and power outlets at every seat and there's more leg space than an airplane—if you book one early they can be as cheap as $5! Excellent! I downloaded two free "Introduction to Spanish" classes and stared out the window, piecing together sentences that somehow summed up how I felt. "Pasión es la única cosa que importa."

Since starting and finishing this column, I went and bought a plane ticket to Toronto for Not Dead Yet… Baby's first time in Canada, yay! I'll be super broke for a little while longer, but who can resist a trinity as fine as Rixe, Una Bèstia Incontrolable and Orden Mundial? Not this fucker! Next month I'll report back on Berserktown fest. Spoiler alert, it was a blast! I would tell you all about it now but I'm well over the mark already. Story of my life. Ta!

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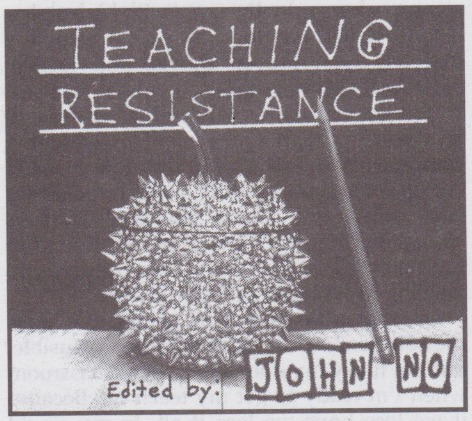

Though the institutions of education are historically problematic and often oppressive, students who have experienced them as "outsiders" (including many punks) understand the importance of learning from teachers who have developed radical notions of what education is and how it works. The Teaching Resistance *column is designed to provide a platform for radical, subversive teachers/educators to share their ideas and draw attention to important issues around education.*

This month's column features some real talk and reflection on a decade of teaching kids in a Title-1 (highly economically impoverished) School in Greenville, South Carolina. It is by Ryan GVSC, whose written ruminations on being a politically-radical, openly punk teacher have been a major influence on the editorial policy of this column. Other than being a teacher, he plays in Low Cotton, Rubrics, and many other bands, and he does the excellent zine, EyesorE. *He recently relocated to Salt Lake City from Greenville, can help with booking bands in SLC, and will take people out for tacos or cook them food if they are traveling through. You can reach Ryan by snail mail at 1225 W. Indiana Ave, Salt Lake City, Utah 84104, USA.*

Didn't you know everyone is a fuckin' cop? We police each other without looking at what mess our own hands have drawn or what our feet have trampled into the house. For the need to be heard, the need to be unchained, to mask our hands worn from frail attacks and feeble attempts at defiance, needs to rationalize, needs that take precedence over realities of the day. Each of which could be acknowledged by open communication and pacing our thoughts, but we're programed to constantly be in flight mode. Stone and wood replaced with gossip and half-truth. We can fight until the sun goes down and a new pile of shit is ready for us to dig through in the morning; but we'll never find ourselves because of what others push unto us and how we never truly give no fucks.

It's nearly August; teachers probably shouldn't be focused on much more than unpaid meetings, reflection for improvement and mornings sipping coffee Google searching ideas for the next year. I examine the dirt in the mirror for the first time this summer out of necessity, a mid-summer team meeting; lines of stale sweat have gathered between the wrinkles on my forehead, my hands resemble a calloused leather glove and the scents of the summer prevail. Mountain swimming holes and hopped pools carry their own hairstyle banner. Accomplishment is to run fingers across my skin and end up with waxy black cylinders of grime. A time well spent is cut-off shirts fading from black to tan to red, as is the soil. Dusk is when I prepare myself to begin thinking about going to bed on time and begin to acknowledge my bad habits that are not allowed by my alarm clock. It is always a challenge to eradicate the word fuck from my vocabulary after a summer of passionate self-deprecation. Time to thrift a new wardrobe. The worn holes in the five pairs of pants I wore on repeat from last year are no longer passable for these people; legs tapered with bike grease and pockets stained with dry erase marker and some leftover pizza I slammed during field day. It's a shame I can't just serve who needs it. Then I could wear shorts everyday and explain the stupid tattoos that cover my body, a true open house. I'd present myself as I appear in my mind, fluid, but I cannot. The public work environment, professionalism, self-privileging, yet culturally dry, parents will never allow self-expression in South Carolina. Why should they look beyond themselves? You only get smaller with a worldview where I come from. Maybe that's how the Southerner flees self-harm in this mosquito stained shit hole.

I was told once in college, "I'd never trust a gay man to teach my kids." The comment remained unchallenged in this University class of fifteen. Teeth clenched, neck sweating and legs bouncing; I remained silent as well. Why would I want to out myself in the beloved shit hole? What did I have to gain when I could lose it all? My thoughts often: "Just got to get through." Figured I'd take on that SLC Punk mentality; better a tool in the system than a piece of shit outside of it. Remnants of this philosophy bear witness in my yearly welcome letter as it lists church as a top priority. So mysterious even cracked gossip punks even think I live for the lord. Could I have been regarded the same without fronting religious believe for all these years? Gem on the buckle of the bible belt, Greenville, South Carolina… Would you regard me an "all-star" if you really knew me? Would you allow me to write nearly any grant I wanted for my school if you knew what my true intent was? I'm just gonna keep tucking in my shirt and smiling because I'm getting away with it; using numbers to write grants to the FDA, local garden club, Target, etc., etc., etc. for free local food to be given away, books, gardens, bikes, community improvement; I've been awarded over $50k for things I knew my people needed by using simple numbers and compound sentences. Making that greedy green work for your kids, on my terms. Teaching kids there is more than one format for expression. Like a rattlesnake waiting on a fallen tree over a creek…It's easy to win when a path is only one-way and your meal has to pass.

You've possibly guessed it by now, I've taught in a highly diversified and low income area for nearly a decade; 99% poverty rate and a school that has a POC administration and that pressure has made me rather neurotic. Of course the socially motivated teacher will make it through a few years, but rigor, procedures and militancy prevail within my work environment. Unfortunately, the students from this school bring in negativity from their neighborhoods. They are taught fear, they are taught hate, they are taught to compare. Unsupervised YouTube and TV do not aid in building a young healthy mind. Imagine when this negativity is inherited by an "educator." Love through control. Communication through negative consequence. Anger at a child. Gavel shattering over simple offenses. This the state of the South East American Title-1 School. I thought because I was in their shoes as a child, I'd prevail. And seemingly I did, but it costs me so much in my mind at times—anger, frustration, depression, failure.

You end up policed; even on the job. But fuck it; it's not about me. Considering who *is* important, the children. Think about who exactly is teaching our children. Sadly in Greenville, SC it was primarily college football watchin' fast food eating rednecks or people so clueless they thought curry was an exotic dance. People who consider hiking an extreme sport, gardening a waste of time and the ability to rationalize and organize information a talent. People who believe in mass-produced role models. You know those, too unreachable, uninspired, and unrealistic for our kids to even think about reaching for. Have you heard of Ruby Payne? This is a major education "guru" who essentially equates being in poverty to having a low-self image and morality. This is the classist doctrine taught in American colleges of education.

At this point, I've got a Bachelor's in Education, a Master's in curriculum and am working on a Ph.D. in educational research which all means a great big *nothing*; teacher preparation in this country is complete bullshit. I've learned nothing, read zero books on education, and spent a lot of the government's money. Half paying attention to every expert, analyst and administrator. Really though, you should see some of the garbage I turn in as "work." Assignments that follow guidelines much more paralleling something that would suit a checklist for a credit card application rather than an activity that challenges you to push your thinking and ideas forward. We are prepared to regurgitate someone else's half-thought through ideas based on research funded by your favorite American corporate interest. Because of course you need Apple technologies to learn and the state happens to love funding it. How could we ever do without it??? *Serve the hive.* We are not prepared for the amount of social work we are required and with general comparative statistics between student-teacher socio-economic status, most teachers haven't experienced, let alone acknowledged, many of the issues (child abuse, poverty, immigration, drug abuse, etc.) that they paid to serve and sort out. Issues double when our state standards are the equivalent of identifying the difference between the ocean and sea; and another quarter of the population protests the Common Core standards because "they take freedum frum the states." I mean some teachers actually agree with high stakes testing. A test provided by ETS; a company that has been proven classist and racially biased—SAT? ACT? ETC?

The general teacher is not educated enough on general topics to become an enriching components to person's life. The industrialized education system prevails in teacher colleges and I'd assume most colleges. Teachers matter, but nobody cares about them and at fault is the classic chicken vs. egg conundrum. Leaving us with distain throughout.

So what is the answer? Depression. What is the solution? Apocalypse. Both are plausible, but I'm lucky my door shuts to my classroom when I'm ready to get my teach on. Because if we lose hope we lose it all. In my world you save one, you save yourself. *We* need capable, organic, wise people teaching our kids. We need bottom to the top so they see the whole spectrum without judgment. This is fighting back versus forgetting. This is feet on the ground, hands on deck, first wave assault and while we get soiled and infected from the trenches; we know that for some we deliver the world; dropping bombs for freedom. And we can be our own medics by screaming at the top of our lungs and pounding out noise.

We need you to get serious about changing the world.

From experience, I can sense the shell-shocked kid from a hellhole called home. The kid that needs an example of non-tradition. Punk will never save a life—adversely more often than not it leads to contributing to the delinquency of a minor. What can save a life is the education punk can at times provide. This education provides is worldview. This education builds patience. This education devalues what is not important; non-descript reviews, hip shit, image—a waste of time if you ask me. I'm a *Nat Geo* subscriber anyway. I don't skate the punk rock pipe dream any longer. This is merely a means to utilize music for the mission. Put it down; preach away, this is direct assistive action boring full force with an assertive, honest and extreme message.

As mentioned earlier, this column is designed to provide a platform for radical, subversive teachers/educators to share their ideas and draw attention to important issues around education; particularly compulsory- and community-based education. If you are a teacher (anywhere in the world) for students of primary or secondary school ages (K-12), community colleges, or alternative learning arrangements such as collectivist free schools, and you want to submit an idea for a column, please write to teachingresistance@gmail.com.

ANDREW UNDERWOOD

"Work and make/make money/hard labor every day/I had many hard times/but all disappears/Fuck it." A punk-as-fuck sentiment, and one I can definitely relate to, that constitutes the chorus of the ERECTIONS' new *Stupid Punk* EP. I've been all about this band's brand of simple street punk, which owes as much to DISCOCKS as it does to the EJECTED, and this month we've been graced with not one but two new releases from them in support of their recent US tour with spiritual brothers WHO KILLED SPIKEY JACKET? *Stupid Punk* is a very solid EP, with some real treats on the B-side. "Don't Fuck With Me" is a tough but typical two-chord punk rocker with a delightful CLASH-esque reggae beat breakdown at the end that elevates the whole endeavor, while "Crazy Oi!" is maybe the most complex song the ERECTIONS have ever written (not that that's saying much) with some great motor-mouthed vocals and interplay between the lead vocal and chorus. "Stupid Punk" may still be my favorite just by virtue of the miserable lyrics, it's a peppy upbeat song about being a stupid dirty punk rocker with no money but always plenty of liquor and weed. Very SAD BOYS in feel, though musically it owes much more to

PETER AND THE TEST TUBE BABIES and the other poppier bands of the UK82 generation. (Joe Pogo, joepogorecords.com)

The split with WHO KILLED SPIKEY JACKET? continues the chaos with "A Way of Life", a statement of dedication to the stupid punk lifestyle with a chorus that'll have you singing along by the second verse. "Greatest Fuckin' Tonight Pt. 2" reconfigures the verse riff of "Louie Louie" into an ode to, surprise surprise, beer and weed! It's almost a throwaway track, but boy that guitar lead at the end fucking rules. Not nearly as great as the full EP material, but I can still get down with it. WHO KILLED SPIKEY JACKET? offer up three songs that might be my favorite material of theirs to date: a bit harder edged, but still pogo at heart. Gotta love a recording that includes spoken word poetry in 2015 for sure. "Guilty as Charged GBH" (GBH standing for Great Big Hair, naturally) is probably my favorite of the lot, but the last track which is either a cover of "Spike Your Hair with Beer" by the ERECTIONS or a redone version with an ERECTION on vocals is as good or better than the original as well. Look, if you're a productive member of society this simply isn't a record for you, but if you value studs over society and beer over everything, this is your new favorite record. (Joe Pogo)

Los Angeles' FUNDAMENTAL are the latest in a relatively long line of LA bands throwing down in the style of early Kyushu noise-punk, and on their new *8 Unhealthy Trax* demo they actually have a fair bit of success. The recording hits heavy on the phaser and super blown-out guitar sound (good) with a nice clean bouncy bass (also good) and clattering tin pan drums (killer). The aggressive and reverb-heavy vocal isn't quite what I'd like it to be (less passion, more snot would be ideal) but it's definitely impactful, and I can dig that this isn't just straight up trying to be the GAI flexi too. The rhythm section is just fantastic, the drums are constant rolls and fills à la the CONFUSE flexi, and the bassist has a real ear for writing lines that capture the DISORDER/Kyushu style. All eight songs fly by, which is rare enough for any demo and while FUNDAMENTAL are much more dialed in to the Japanese style, I get a real ROTTEN FUX vibe from this in that I bet their live show is a chaotic, falling-over confrontational mess. Highly recommended for noize punk fanatics! (FundamentalNoise@gmail.com)

Osaka's LASTSENTENCE have been constantly growing and changing both in sound and lineup since their MOB 47/FRIGORA-influenced demo, and the tracks on their new split with VOCO PROTESTA are worlds away from that style. Truthfully, they're still a mangel style band, but now they're on a mid-tempo NO SECURITY kind of kick (there's even a hint of PUKE in the mix), with strong bellowed vocals and a hint of melody in the guitar lines that's definitely new for them. Both songs are strong, but I think "Equality" is the hit. On the counter, VOCO PROTESTA continue to prove that they're one of the most consistent and underrated bands going, offering up two tracks of their defiantly borderless hardcore that employs everything from Italian ranting vocals to a South American swarm of bees guitar sound to the classic MOB 47 C-beat in their attack. I dunno, everybody's got their thing, but if you can't get into VOCO PROTESTA we're definitely not on the same page. Bonus points to them for having some of the best center label art I've seen in a long time. (Doomed to Extinction Records, dtepunk.com)

I know I talk about stripped-down, fucked-up punk rock a lot, but rarely does a record come along that embodies that ideal as well as the FRENOPATICSS reissue EP. Including all seven tracks this gang of Spanish hooligans recorded in their short but influential career (members went on to SUBTERRANEAN KIDS and GRB), this is the ne plus ultra of underground proto-hardcore, gem after gem of fucked up, catchy punk that is only enhanced by the gutter recording. From the marching sounds of "Negros" (definite shades of RIP) to the classic melodic punk swagger of "Suicidio" (the drumroll-into-bass opening? Perfect.) to the razor-sharp hardcore of "Haz De La Muerte Un Amigo", this record serves as both a state of the scene for Spain 1981 and a glimpse of the greatness to come, all housed in a glossy fold-out sleeve with some great pictures, lyrics and band history. This is an absolutely essential reissue, well done on every level. (Vomitopunkrock Records, vprrecords@gmail.com)

We'll see what comes up next month (I'm hoping I get the new NO FUTURES CD in time!) but until then, make sure that even if you have no money, you always have plenty of liquor and weed. And send me that fucking ISTERISMO flexi already! Get me c/o *MRR* or at agunderwood@gmail.com.

FELIX HAVOC
FIN DE SIÈCLE ANGST

A lot of music is kind of background noise and entertainment. In one ear, and out the other. But the very best connects with the listener on a visceral, emotional, primal level. Some of my very favorite records are like time machines. When the needle drops, I am transported to a time and place, away from the stress and strife of everyday life.

I forever live in the shadow of the music of the '70s and '80s as those were the formative years of my life. And the most I can say about a lot of music that has come and gone is that it was good for the day, but hasn't held up so well over time. On the other hand, some records are getting even better with age. That is to say, at the time they didn't stand out so much from the pack, but now after twenty or thirty years, their brilliance outshines the others around them. Let' talk about a few records that just get better and better the more I listen to them.

Bags – "Survive/Babylonian Gorgon" 7": I have written about how much I love this record before, but the more I keep flipping it over and over, the better it sounds. Dangerhouse and Dischord are to me, the most important labels in the history of American punk. Dangerhouse had the sense to call it quits at just the right time and their back catalog is a time capsule to a unique moment in musical history. As years go by though, this single stands out further and further from the pack. Just two songs, but two absolutely perfect songs. I can't stop my heart from racing and my blood from pumping when this rager is on the turntable. These days only the Avengers single comes close for me in the Dangerhouse roster.

Poison Idea – "Pick Your King" EP: One *MRR* reviewer wrote something about how Western Civilization pretty much peaked with this 7". I find it hard to disagree. Most of the art and culture of the past few decades has been tawdry commercial bullshit, but there are a few shining examples of raging purity and this is at the top of the heap. For me, this record has gone from just another crucial early '80s hardcore record, to total Top Five status. There is a ferocious urgency to this record that puts it in a time and place that cannot be recreated.

Urban Waste – "Police Brutality" EP: This 7" has really seen its reputation grow over the decades. This band was never terribly popular, at least as far as I remember. But as time goes by, this record sounds fresher, rawer and more savage than ever. Years ago if you had asked me my favorite NYHC 7", I would have said Antidote, but this record is making its way to the top of the NYHC list for me. I remember when I first got this 7", thinking the guys in the band photo looked so tough. Now I look at it, they look so young! Music so fierce and these guys look like they are barely out of high school. Really a top shelf rager, just keeps getting better.

Lewd – "American Wino" LP: By the time you read this a new pressing of this classic will be on the shelves. The record has really grown on me over the years. I have always liked it, but listen to it now more than I ever did in the past. I really like how this album *feels* like a dirty raw punk rock record, but the delivery is at hardcore speed and intensity. Like it was recorded in that mystical period between '77 punk and '82 hardcore were discernable and distinct genres. Some really great catchy songs on this record, but more than ever it's the lyrics that speak to me. There aren't a lot of records anymore that I know *all* the words to *all* the songs and this is one of them. The Lewd had such raw and street level lyrics, *real punk* lyrics. Songs like "Suburban Prodigy," "Mobile Home" and "Dressed in Black" speak to me, personally, in a way few bands' lyrics do. Maybe it's because I grew up poor suburban white trash and discovered punk at a young age, but I feel like they wrote these songs about *my* life. That's a real connection I just don't get with very many bands.

Crumbsuckers – "Life of Dreams" LP: I will talk a bit more about crossover next issue, but I rather feel like a lot of crossover has *not* held up so well. There were far too many clumsy attempts to mix punk and metal in the mid/late '80s and only a few dozen bands really pulled it off seamlessly. Of these, Crumbsuckers are one of my favorites. I long believed that these guys were Long Island metalheads who happened upon hardcore, but the recent reissue of the early demo material, made me reexamine my stereotype. Crumbsuckers were unknown to me until this 1986 LP showed up in my local record store. But they had some earlier demos that are more straightahead hardcore thrash much like *Dirty Rotten*-era DRI. In fact, the metal crunch seems to have been added to a lot of pre-existing hardcore songs. But to such an effect! The thing that strikes one after listening to the more hardcore demo version and the polished, metallic LP versions, is that this band *needed* some flashy and bombastic guitar work to put them right over the top. I cannot imagine "Life of Dreams" as a straight hardcore record—from the get go it's full of wailing, blazing, dive bombing metal guitar licks. This would work to the detriment of *many* bands who tried to mix punk and metal, but for this group, it's the winning formula. This LP was recently reissued, but honestly, you could probably find an original for about the same price and not have to get a headache looking at the super low resolution scan of the boss Sean Taggart cover art. Seriously Back in Black records, there is a higher resolution on scanners now than 72 dpi, use some of the money from 30$ re issues of $15 dollar records to buy a scanner, or just take it to Kinkos and let them scan it. I am far from tech savvy, but I know a pixelated record cover when I see it and that shit is a buzzkill.

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A few months ago I talked about my enduring dedication to AC/DC and how going to see them in 1981 was a formative event in my life. Well it just so happens that the recent AC/DC rarities box set "BackTracks" features three live songs from the show I was at. Hard to believe it was 34 years ago. If you listen closely you can hear me singing along to "TNT".

Not a lot of good bands play here these days. And when they do, it's at these shows with five bands that start at 11:00 p.m. on a Tuesday. As a member of the working class, I find these show times discriminatory. But no one is booking shows for my demographic, so I just wind up missing a lot of bands, or leaving early because I have to work in the morning. (Half the people reading this are nodding in sympathy, the other half think I am a poseur and lightweight,) But I did get to see Pure Disgust, who were much more exciting live than on their already great records. This band's mix of stripped down hardcore and UK82 punk is like a breath of fresh air, like those early Negative Approach demos where they were just making the transition from '77 punk to hardcore. Both 7"s are great and the live show is worth catching if you can. It sends their stock way up with me that they are from Washington DC.

One thing I've noticed is how a lot of people who "drop out" or move on from hardcore punk have a kind of time traveller mentality about it. A lot of people seem to think that the scene and the subculture somehow ended when they ceased to be involved. They are then rather surprised that punk is "still a thing" despite their lack of participation. This seems especially true of SE hardcore types. They tend to get so wrapped up in it, that when they ditch the way of life they turn on it and ridicule it. I am frequently amused when I run into people who are long gone from the punk scene, but have these time capsule memories that are totally out of whack with what's going on today. From time to time I will sell a record in my Ebay store and get messages like "Is this label related to the Havoc Records that used to be run by the guy from Code 13?" Actually, it is the SAME Havoc Records, still run by the "guy from Code 13". Punk might be a closed chapter to some, but for others the story is still being written.

futures and pasts
*erika elizabeth

It might be an increasingly rare occurrence in this modern digital era of seemingly endless access to information on even the most obscure topics, but it's still always great to find something that, for all intents and purposes, is a genuine mystery. I can't really tell you much about REVERSE, a six-piece post-punk band who put out a 12" EP called *Synchysis* in 1980 and then more or less vanished without a trace (at least when it comes to search engine results), but sparking the interest of even one or two people toward records like this one is the entire reason I'm doing these columns in the first place. The jagged, danceable rhythms and the way vocalist Tina Spike connects all of the dots between speaking and shrieking on EP-standout "Greed" would normally have me saying something like "undeniably influenced by PYLON," except for the fact that *Synchysis* arrived at roughly the same time as that band's landmark *Gyrate* album, which means that REVERSE were operating as a sort of parallel PYLON in whatever American city or town they were actually from (New York City? Los Angeles? Wichita, Kansas?). The intersecting co-ed vocals and buzzing synth aside, you probably could have passed the dark post-punk throb of "Not the Police" off to me as a long-lost MYDOLLS recording, and I say this as a native Houstonian who adores MYDOLLS in the same way that most punks from my hometown adore REALLY RED. When male vocalist J. Jenkins takes the lead on the much more new wave-y "Local Trash" and "Oil City," REVERSE almost come across as the B-52's with Fred Schneider replaced by someone from a power pop band, although Tina's fiery call-and-response is what really sells it. You just know that in basements and closets across the US, there are boxes and boxes of unheard records just like this one, relics of punk rock pasts with histories and narratives that exist outside the imperfect cultural mirror that is the internet. As I'm writing this column, there are actually multiple sealed (!) copies of the 12" for sale online that will set you back less than the cost of a typical new 7" in this day and age, so if you're looking for an utterly forgotten (yet killer) '80s post-punk document that even your scummiest of collector scum friends won't know about, I'd jump on this one.

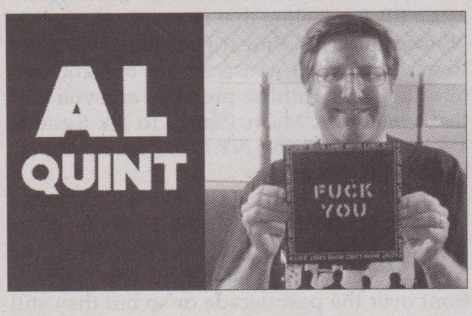
The all-female German art-punk band CARAMBOLAGE aren't quite as mysterious, although what little I've been able to decipher about their roots and backstory has been filtered through the heavily fractured lens of the German-to-English Google translate tool (the term "lipstickfeminismus" apparently defies translation). Their self-titled LP from 1980 has its roots in the same burgeoning Neue Deutsche Welle/New German Wave scene that fellow German lady post-punk agitators MALARIA would also spring from just a year or two later—highly dramatic vocals that are squealed, shouted and spit (in German, thank you) over barbed wire No Wave noise, colliding head-on with angular, choppy post-punk rhythms and some sinister synth flourishes that sound like the stuff of Werner Herzog's nightmares. The insistent bass pulse and breathless girl gang backing vocals on "Rampenlicht/Lampenfieber" could have descended directly from the raw, feral feminine energy of the SLITS, with echoes of CARAMBOLAGE's kindred femme-punk spirits KLEENEX across the German border in Switzerland turning up in the off-kilter, freewheeling delirium of "Was Hat Das Für Einen Sinn." At their bleakest, there's almost an early industrial-meets-deathrock vibe in the clattering, hypnotic drum patterns and general atmosphere of unease (see: "Tu Doch Nicht So"). Really awesome, uncompromising stuff from three ladies who regretfully don't seem to have reached the same "revolutionary and inspirational badasses" status as some of their European femme-punk peers.

I don't know what you were doing when you were twelve years old, but I can almost guarantee you that it wasn't nearly as cool as what Chandra Oppenheim was up to at the same age—backed by New York City downtown new wavers the MODEL CITIZENS (who were looking for a child to front an experimental rock project and found Chandra through connections to her father, conceptual artist Dennis Oppenheim), she recorded the four-song *Transportation* 12" EP as CHANDRA (just CHANDRA—y'know, like Cher) in 1980. There's been plenty of amazing, ahead-of-their-time teenage punks throughout the years who have become total inspirations for legions of DIY-minded musical beginners, but the list of preteen (!) post-punk geniuses that includes CHANDRA at the very top is much, much shorter (please write to me if I'm wrong). The funky mutant disco of the EP's "Opposite" is clearly the by-product of the same female-driven early '80s NYC dance-punk scene that gave birth to ESG, Lizzy Mercier Descloux and the TOM TOM CLUB, while Chandra's sing-song chanting weaving throughout the stark minimal wave of "Concentration" recalls the joyously anarchic UK femme-punk of the RAINCOATS. My favorite track of all might be "Kate" (featuring Chandra on melodica!), which is essentially a five-and-a-half minute diss on a girl from her school (choice line: "there's a girl named Kate and she thinks she's really great / but she's not") with Chandra sounding more than a little like Ari Up, who was only fourteen herself when the SLITS first formed. *Transportation* got the reissue treatment in 2008 (followed by another pressing last year), including the addition of four previously unreleased songs that were intended to be a follow-up EP from Chandra and a new all-teenage backing band called the CHANDRA DIMENSION, which never saw the light of day because she decided to put music on the backburner while she concentrated on her schoolwork. It's completely unreal to think of what this girl might have been doing by the time she was old enough to drive, based on the tightly-wound DELTA 5-esque post-punk stutter on those scrapped tracks. How in the fuck did it take until just recently for this record to pop up on my radar?! (chandra1980.bandcamp.com)

I was one of those kids who started immersing myself in alternative and punk culture right on the cusp of the internet becoming a totally commonplace and ubiquitous thing, which meant that most of my entryways into underground music were the old-fashioned analog ones—taping hours worth of shows from the local college radio station, pouring over reviews in zines and record guides (*Trouser Press* was particularly life-changing), and scanning the other releases mentioned in the printed label catalogs that I found stuffed into new records that I bought. My computer-aided methods for discovering and tracking down music fifteen years later aren't really that different; it all just happens quicker now. Case in point: I came across *Never Knows Best*, the latest tape from St. Louis' POSTURE, after noticing it in the releases section of the website for Manic Static Records (who put out the BLOWDRYER cassette that I wrote about in last issue's column), which is basically the 2015 version of circling things that look interesting in a label's paper catalog. Their take on charmingly ragged, blown-out noise-pop is giving me all sorts of '90s nostalgia for bands like ERIC'S TRIP, who were similarly gifted at balancing fidelity-punishing punk racket with dreamy melodies, especially in POSTURE's alternating boy/girl vocals from guitarists Nick Goldschmidt and Allison Durham. It's a musical wavelength that isn't too far removed from the rough-around-the-edges primitivism of the contemporary Australian underground pop scene, either—the Nick-sung title track is a shambling WOOLLEN KITS-ish rush, with Allison-fronted "Place" channeling the scrappy jangle of TWERPS or DICK DIVER. They even end the tape with a slightly disjointed and super-endearing cover of "Janitor" by SUBURBAN LAWNS, which makes me think that they might be the most effortlessly cool teenage (or barely-post-teenage) kids in St. Louis right now. (posturestl.bandcamp.com)

NAKED LIGHTS are an Oakland, California quintet who seem to have been completely and collectively possessed by the ghost of late '70s/early '80s post-punk, despite very much existing within the boundaries of present time and space, or so they claim. The dub-influenced, bass-centric rhythmic fixation underpinning the scratchy, cut-up messthetic of their latest album, *On Nature* (currently only available in the digital realm, although hopefully that'll change soon), points to more than a few hours spent with 1980's *Wanna Buy A Bridge?* compilation LP on Rough Trade, and singer Aurora Crispin's vocals follow the proud tradition of loopy non-linearity that goes back to her first wave post-punk godmothers in FAMILY FODDER, LUDUS or ESSENTIAL LOGIC. (I'm sure Lora Logic would also approve of the seriously skronky sax that they introduce on "Mechanical Eye.") At the risk of simply rattling off a bunch of UKDIY touchstones, the footprints of THIS HEAT and the POP GROUP are all over the warped jazz and spiky funk leanings propelling "Mostly Bag" and "Nicht Leiden," coupled with the wiry, nervous energy of BIG FLAME. The period-perfect attention to detail on this thing is pretty incredible, to the point where you could almost question whether or not *On Nature* was actually pieced together from lost demos sent to John Peel back in the day. Bringing things thematically full circle here, further research seems to indicate that a good number of NAKED LIGHTS's members did some time with a couple of big names in the mid/late '90s white belt Romulan screamo scene (who will go unnamed in this column), which I never would have guessed in a million years—the things you can find out on the internet, am I right? (nakedlights.bandcamp.com)

Send me letters and music! Let's talk! Analog: Erika Elizabeth / 2545 E. Burnside Street #203 / Portland, OR 97214 / USA; digital: ripitupstartagain@gmail.com; radio shows for your listening enjoyment: expresswaytoyrskull.com



Proto-This 'N' That

My email inbox is clogged nearly every day by an abundance of music biz press releases, most of them from a small group of publicity companies. The releases usually provide a link to a digital "promo" for me to review. I wrote about this a few years ago, as part of an April Fools' column, where I said I'd only be reviewing digital promos from that point forward and the email address to send them to would be whoneedsrecords@sonicoverload.net. It's still an active address, but except for the occasional spam message, it's pretty quiet. Some wiseass subscribed me to a "cougar" website. I'm much too old for any "cougar" to be interested in me. And I know many people are offended by the term so let's just move on.

A couple of recent ones stick out. There was one pushing a cover of the TROGGS' "With A Girl Like You" by an *artiste* named William Alexander. There was a link to check out the song on a site called Culture Collide. As you can imagine, it wasn't very good. Alexander does his damnedest to sound like the TROGGS' Reg Presley and comes up a bit short. The whole thing comes up short because there's little chance any cover is going to capture the primitive gleefulness of that song. But the accompanying blurb caught my attention. It called "With A Girl Like You," *"perhaps the best TROGGS song (and likely the only memorable one aside from 'Wild Thing.'")"* My immediate thought was, are you fucking kidding me? Only memorable songs? I left a comment on the page asking if the writer had actually listened to the TROGGS. I emailed the publicist and told her the same thing and she replied and said, "off the record, I think you're right." I guess it's not really off the record anymore, but I doubt William Alexander or his handlers read this column.

Incidentally, if you do ever want to check out a rather, uh, unique cover of "Wild Thing," look up FANCY's 1974 version of it—it's on YouTube. FANCY was basically a studio group who got together to do this song and they hired a Penthouse Pet named Helen Caunt (I am *not* making that up) to do the vocals—which was basically her whispering and grunting and groaning her way through it. They rearranged it into a minimalist, GARY GLITTER-ish hand-clapper with some choice synth and wah-wah guitar lines in the middle. After it proved to be a hit, an album was released. (I got it for my fifteenth birthday, along with ELP's three record live opus *Welcome Back My Friends To The Show That Never Ends* AKA the album that never ends), Ms. Caunt—whose vocal performance wasn't credited—had been replaced by Annie Kavanaugh, an adequate belter, but the songs, save the "Wild Thing" retread "Touch Me," were forgettable. It's still on my record shelf. The ELP record is long-gone.

The other press release was for a band that plays "Proto-punk influenced post-punk." That makes absolutely no sense. I mean, using those genre terms is a reviewer crutch of which I am 100% guilty. The band, DARK PALMS, actually sound more like the STOOGES-meet-shoegazer rock, if I had to pin it down. It wasn't that bad, honestly.

So it got me to pondering whether or not there was music you could call "proto-hardcore"—music that had speed and velocity and inspired hardcore but predated it. It's arbitrary, but I guess you could call something proto-hardcore if it came out before 1980, maybe even 1979. I know BLACK FLAG started earlier than that but I don't think "Nervous Breakdown" is really hardcore. A strong argument could be made for the GERMS 1979 *(GI)* album being one of the first pure hardcore albums.

The RUTS' "The Crack" album came out in '79 and features a few songs that have the speed of hardcore—"Society" and "Criminal Mind" pick up the pace a great deal. "Society" was also the B-side of their "Babylon's Burning" single.

PUNISHMENT OF LUXURY weren't really a dyed-in-the-wool punk band, having come from more of a ROXY/BOWIE/early-ULTRAVOX muse. But the B-side of their 1979 *Secrets 7"* is a different matter altogether—a fired-up ripper called "Brainbomb." Pure explosiveness with an engaging *"B-B-B-B-B-B-B-B, Brainbomb!"* tagline and a wacked-out noisy mid-section before the pillaging resumes. CHAOS UK covered it on their *Chipping Sodbury Bonfire Tapes* album.

There were other UK bands that inspired hardcore bands. "Disease," from the UK SUBS' 1979 debut album *A Different Kind Of Blues*, had the requisite speed and SOA sped it up considerably for their cover on *Flex Your Head*. MINOR THREAT covered WIRE's "12XU" on the same compilation. That came from *Pink Flag* and that song wasn't really proto-hardcore but "Mr. Suit" sure as hell was. Another DC band, SECOND WIND, did that one on their *Security* album. 999's "No Pity," from 1977, has a near thrash beat, going along perfectly with Nick Cash's cat-thrown-into-the-fire snarl.

One could make a convincing argument that the UK band that had the biggest influence on hardcore was the DAMNED. There are some pretty formidable bashers on their debut album *Damned Damned Damned* and their cover of the STOOGES' "1970" (re-titled "I Feel Alright") is non-stop bedlam. But it's the title track of their third album, *Machine Gun Etiquette* (1979) that dishes out the speed and fury and "Love Song" isn't far behind. SWIZ covered "MGE" on one of their records. It makes sense that you see Ian MacKaye, Henry Rollins and Keith Morris all singing the praises of the DAMNED in the *Don't You Wish That We Were Dead* documentary (granted, they're in *every* music documentary but still...). By the way, the title comes from the lyrics of "Machine Gun Etiquette."

The MIDDLE CLASS's *Out of Vogue* EP came out in '78 and the title track and "Insurgence" are relentless. They did gradually move into the post-punk realm (I know...) but those early recordings are certainly what one could call proto-hardcore.

Going back even further—and maybe stretching things a bit—BLUE ÖYSTER CULT's "The Red and The Black," from their *Tyranny and Mutation* LP, has a pretty rapid tempo for 1973. The MINUTEMEN liked it enough to cover it later on. Hell, I might give a nod to the rave-up (i.e. unhinged) part of the COUNT FIVE's 1966 hit "Psychotic Reaction"—which sounded like a more up-tempo YARDBIRDS knock-off.

What about "I Got A Right" by IGGY AND THE STOOGES? I wrote a column about that last year, stating it was ahead-of-its-time punk rock and, given the upbeat arrangement, it does come close—and, of course, has been covered by a number of hardcore and punk bands over the years, but I don't think I'd really call it proto-hardcore. It's the same for the Belgian band BLAST's two song single "Damned Flame/Hope." At the very least, it's some pretty raw punk-sounding fodder for 1972 and has a similar feel as "I Got A Right," in its Detroit punk predilection. It just got a legit reissue on the Death Vault label but it's already sold out (and, of course, I snoozed and missed out). Yes, lines can get blurry but the bottom line is both of those records were pretty off-the-rails for that time period.

Maybe next time, I can do a column about proto-straightedge. Like "I'm Straight" by the MODERN LOVERS or the anti-drug "Kicks" by PAUL REVERE & THE RAIDERS, written by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, from 1966, with these inspiring lyrics: *"Kicks just keep gettin' harder to find/And all your kicks ain't bringin' you peace of mind/Before you find out it's too late, girl/You better get straight."*

Maybe not... I should probably quit while I'm still ahead.

Post-This 'N' That

BÖRN are an Icelandic band playing haunting goth punk on their four-song EP (following up a previous 12"), merging punchy early '80s (i.e. JOY DIVISION et al) bass lines with a powerful and chilling attack. The vocals have a SIOUXSIE-ish swoop to them, with a sometimes-abrasive, overbearing timbre but they're certainly attention-grabbing. (Total Negativity, totalnegativity.storenvy.com)

PRESSING ON, from Portland, includes people from such bands as TALK IS POISON, RAW NERVES and FROM ASHES RISE. On their self-titled demo, the sound maintains some of the elements of those bands and adds a slightly more traditional hardcore approach. Fast 'n' loud, with hearty back-up vocals, searing leads and they also take a street punk turn for "Liberation." Good-sounding stuff. (pressingon.bandcamp.com)

"This world sucks and I just don't give a crap"—that line is on the leadoff track, "Blow Me Up," for MALE PATTERNS' *Thinking Too Much* EP. I'm feeling that one and also feeling "Pissed and Old." Pure trigger-finger hardcore from Albany. No nonsense, no bullshit, just bile done with ruthless precision and you *need* that sometimes. Mean. (Shock To The System, 19 Grant Ave, Albany, NY 12206, malepatterns.bandcamp.com)

Two veteran California bands, HOLOKAUST and ARMISTICE, hook up for a split 7" on Know Records. HOLOKAUST haven't been all that active on the recording front over the past decade or so but they still sound as pissed-off as ever on their three songs. Armistice's first new material since 2000 also shows them in fine form—blistering crusty hardcore packed with adrenalin and hot riffage. Not life-changing but still pretty good. (Know, PO Box 90579, Long Beach, CA 90809, www.knowrecords.com)

Post-punk (post!) trio PERMANENT MAKEUP return with their second album *Taker* and it's another trip into nervy regions. Distorted bass, jazzbo and otherworldly guitar touches and son-of-D. Boon vocals. It's not constant cacophony but PERMANENT MAKEUP aren't afraid to go against the grain, as with the nearly free-form segment for "Adult." Songs like "Weak In The Knees" and "Moderation" jab away with an incessant urgency. If anything, they sound feistier than in the past although they've never been an easy listening band. Uneasy listening? That's more fitting. (New Granada, newgranada.com)

So much hardcore punk in the early '80s was the end result of suburban revolt—quickly realizing you didn't fit in with accepted norms. Getting shit from the jocks, the popular kids, the cops, etc. Realizing you were *different* from everyone else. That was the root of New Jersey's SAND IN THE FACE, if you read the liner notes of their LP, penned by bass player Pete Wegele, who some of you might know as Peter Aaron from CHROME CRANKS. Yep, Pete has a hardcore past (he also played in SLUGGO when he lived in Cincinnati and, on a personal note, he's the guy who turned me onto the PAGANS!). Mad At The World Records has unleashed *Music Made To Riot: New Jersey Hardcore 1982-1983,* an eighteen song 12", fourteen of which are from a demo and previously-unreleased. Two ended up on *The Master Tape Volume 2* and two, recorded with a different bass player, were on the *Hardcore Takes Over* comp. While they embraced the speedy tumult of the hardcore of the day, SAND IN THE FACE had a few other tricks up their sleeves—some more traditional and west coast punk stylings, for instance. They sometimes sound like they're about to fly apart but it's fairly tight and youthful energy does count for a lot. (matwrecords.com)

It's always inspiring to see bands stick around a long time and never lose their edge, never lose their passion, and continue to critique the world's sad state of affairs. The two gentlemen in ACTIVE MINDS are one of those bands. They came through Boston not too long ago and played their hearts out in front of way too small an audience. One of the set's standouts closes out their new five song *EP New Puppets/Same Old Machine.* That would be the catchy-as-fuck, goddamn near-punk anthem of "We're Still Angry" that I was singing along with by the time they hit the last chorus. Active Minds imbue their punk with the occasional dose of Motör-rockin' ("Economic Migrants") and bursts of speed, making a full-sounding racket for just a two-piece. Long may they rail. (Loony Tunes, 69 Wykeham Street, Scarborough, N. Yorks Y012 7SA, UNITED KINGDOM, activeminds1.bandcamp.com)

Finally, I got a pair of 7"s from the Sacramento Records label located, oddly enough, in Sacramento, CA. CHARLES ALBRIGHT is a band led by, oddly enough, a guy named Charles Albright. Loud, squalling rock with sheets of feedback and fuzz. This one-sided 7" has one original, "Short Skirt," and a raucous cover of one of NIRVANA's best songs, "Territorial Pissings." Set the controls to kill for this one. The other disc is a flexi from MATT K. SHRUGG called *Matt K. Shrugg Goes Bananas* and features three cover songs from another Sacto band, the BANANAS—the flexi is yellow, of course. Brash-sounding trebly garage-pop-punk with gigantic hooks and plenty of bash. Not lo-fi but far from polished and it makes the speakers shake. Killah. (331 21st St., Sacramento, CA 98511, sacramaniacs.com)

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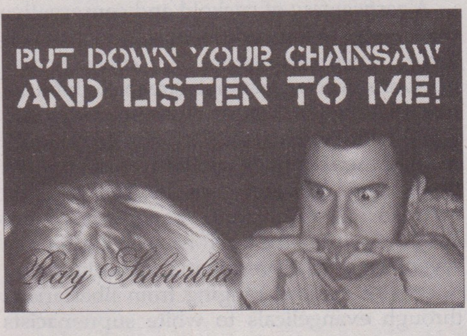


"You punk. Look at you, you fucking punk."
—1000 Homo DJs, "Hey Asshole"

So my original plan for this column was going to be a tour journal type thing of the ridiculous Autonomy West Coast tour last month. It was going to be chock full of humorous takes on the plethora of ridiculous situations we encountered driving across the western half of the US and back. Stuff like our 3 ½ van breakdowns, having to buy a new van in the middle of the Utah desert, shows being moved due to paint fumes, shows being turned into goth DJ nights because there were no bands to play, us getting added to the most amazing Midwest punk show of the summer at the last minute.

But then in the past week, two really fucking weird things happened to me. One was when Autonomy played our last show of tour at Fed Up Fest, back here in Chicago, and the other was when an old friend of mine visiting from NYC, his brother, and I went out for drinks.

While the tour had its problems, it was also one of those experiences that makes DIY punk seem so wonderful and charming. Wonderful dinners cooked by friends thousands of miles away buttressing the hell of ten to twelve hour drives. Legs driving from Canada into the US to pick us and all our gear up in their van, and driving us back the next day, so we could avoid possible hassles at the border with our new, unregistered vehicle. Shit that makes you love your friends even more and realize that touring is not only a completely insane and unnatural thing to do, but one of the most exciting things one could be so privileged to experience.

So it's funny that even though we were stuck in the Utah desert town of Green River for two and a half days with a completely broken vehicle and the guy who booked a much needed show between two eight-plus hour drives reserved the VFW hall for the wrong day, it wasn't until I was back in my hometown that I started to even begin to ask the question:

What the fuck am I doing here with all these punk rock assholes?!

Let's start with what happened at Fed Up Fest. Nothing crazy, or controversial, just something weird. And completely asshole-ish.

As we were walking up the stairs to the gymnasium of the Benton House community center I noticed a handwritten sign on the door: "No Police Allowed." There was some other stuff written underneath that read along the lines of the idea of "kill the cop in your head," and to be cool with each other. I thought, "That's kinda cheesy, but hey, it's still pretty cool."

I now find it so hilariously ironic.

After Autonomy finished up our set, Liz and I went to the merch table. We were completely tour crazy, and had played the Lumpy and the Dumpers / Brain Tumors / Wild Child show in Minneapolis the night before, staying up 'til 3:00 a.m. and having to leave at 8:00 a.m. in order to make it to Chicago in time for our early afternoon slot at the fest. As we were sitting there we saw the same stuff that happens at all merch tables at shows. People come by and awkwardly look at merch they have no intention of buying, just to kill some time. Folks wanting to talk about our set, actually buying some stuff. Friends asking us about tour. As I was busy reorganizing the merch boxes under the table, and Liz attended to people looking at things I noticed that there was a person standing a few feet back from the table, not really looking at stuff at all, just kind of waiting. Waiting for me.

I was kinda confused, but curious. I didn't recognize this person at all. Was it someone I knew from when I lived in Chicago thirteen years ago? A lot of my friends look totally different now. Was it someone I played a show with, or booked, while I was living in Carbondale, or Milwaukee? I spent most of my 20s at the bottom of a whiskey bottle and an eighth bag, so I often completely forget people until my brain gets gently prodded. Being that there was mental confusion I figured, "Let's just figure this out."

"Hey there! What's up?"

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"Why were you wearing an ICP shirt on stage?"

OK. First things first: I was *not* wearing an ICP shirt. I was wearing an ICP hockey jersey. I want the record to note the difference. Secondly, I was wearing it up until we played our set, when I took it off and put it away. No one in Autonomy wears shirts with graphics or logos on stage.

But at this point I'm really confused.

"Uh...I mean...I guess I wear it cause it's really big and comfortable."

"Well, I just want you to know that that's really fucked up. ICP is really fucking racist. And you wearing that shirt is *the* most triggering thing that I've seen this entire weekend."

"..."

And then they just walked away.

Now tell me, *exactly what the fuck is that shit?!*

While I might not be a fan of ICP's music, I'm really into the idea of the whole juggalo culture. And to be honest, I'm really into ICP as a political entity. The FBI made their entire subculture a criminal group. So ICP sued the FBI. The ATF tried to sneak their way in the Gathering last year, and ICP's organization immediately showed up with cameras and lawyers and recorded the ATF agents literally running back to their vehicles. There's a lot to be said about a group that gives hope and community to people who are socially disenfranchised. Shitty music aside. But also, ICP *isn't* racist. Very much not. Now if this person had called them sexist, well, I would have to completely agree with them and have a conversation about that. But that's also the thing, they *didn't* want to have a conversation. They just wanted to tell me that I was a bad boy and I was in trouble. They wanted to be a cop.

I fucking can't stand people use "call out" or "accountability" culture to cram their personal feelings down other people's throats as some kind of social law. First off, my ICP shirt was "the most triggering thing [you've] seen all weekend?" Well, it sure seems like you're having a pretty fucking good weekend. Secondly, how fucking dare you minimize the trauma of actual victims by hijacking their language. You don't like my ICP shirt, and you don't like me wearing it, and by the look on your face you don't like me much either.

Tough shit.

Stop being a selfish dramatic asshole cop trying to frame your personal feelings into political language in order to browbeat me. Also, as Vinny from Autonomy pointed out when I told him what happened...

"They are *literally* clowns."

Politics are why I got into punk. But sometimes the politics of punk are so ridiculous you can't help but laugh. Which I do every time I think about this person stewing in the back of a gymnasium for our entire set, working themselves up for a confrontation, and then kind of reeling at my incredibly boring response, and then storming off to the back of the gym and giving me a stinkeye for the majority of SBSM's set.

Fucking punks, man. Can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em.

Let's move on to point number two in which your columnist hero nearly punches a friend of ten-plus years in front of his brother for the racist-ass shit that fell out of his mouth.

So a guy I know flew into the Midwest from NYC for a wedding in Wisconsin. I've known him since 2004, when his band first toured through the town I was living in. We became rather close friends, so much that I even moved in with him the next year in Milwaukee. He moved out of the house, and eventually to NYC, but we've always remained friends and in touch. I'm actually close with both his brothers as well—I live with one of them here in Chicago. And that's why he ended up at my place.

Here's the thing, though, that I didn't really realize. He's become a full-blown boring-ass, white, middle class liberal. He works for the city of New York, if that gives you any idea. Though he's not a company man. He actually sued the NYPD—and won—over a wrongful arrest and harsh treatment during an unprovoked incident that occurred when he was a little bit drunk.

Good thing he's a white, middle class liberal, huh?

Anyway, we go to my job because I get cheap drink at the bar. My roommate knows a lot of the bartenders and staff there cause he comes in from time to time. Everyone's happy to meet his brother, in from out of town. The drink flows, the laughs get louder. But then something really strange happens. One of the cooks comes out of the kitchen, fresh off the clock, and sits next to me to chat and have a drink. We work together five days a week, if not more. He's a couple years younger than me, Mexican-Puerto Rican born and bred in Humboldt Park, Chicago. We introduced to the out-of-towner, who immediately starts talking to him in Spanish.

What?

We all kinda laugh. And I tell him, "Hey man, you don't really need to do that." He laughs it off and continues in Spanish. My co-worker actually has to tell him, "Yo, dude. Knock it the fuck off, I don't speak Spanish, OK?" To which he replies, "Oh, *actually* I switched to Portuguese there."

Oh. OK. Now you're being a little racist and whole of a dick.

Things escalate slightly, and we decide to leave. I'm more than slightly embarrassed to be with this guy at my job, as is my roommate. And in our infinite wisdom we decide to go down the street to a nearby 4:00 a.m. bar. Always a good idea.

So guy is hung up on what happened at the previous bar. He doesn't get how what he did was offensive. I simply tried to explain that you can't just speak to people in Spanish that you randomly meet because they look like they're of Latino origin. That's kind fucked up, and kinda racist. But of course, he's a white, middle class liberal now and there's *no fucking way* he could possibly be racist. He hates Scott Walker and loves Bernie Sanders!

Oh, did I mention that he refers to the time he lived in Milwaukee in punk houses as living a "post-capitalist" lifestyle? You know, because dumpster diving and food scams.

Anyway, we keep going on and on—perhaps with a bit too much drink—and he drops it.

"You're not *actually* Latino, Ray."

Ah! Vino veritas!

"Excuse me?!"

"You're pretty much totally white, dude."

It's been a long time since I've been in a fistfight. A minute since I decked someone. But just because I haven't, doesn't mean I won't. Especially for some vile-ass, racist-ass, paternalistic, condescending bullshit.

As I get up with the specific intention of trying to break this guy's nose, so he can't even go to the wedding he flew across the country for. I look over at my roommate, guy's brother, and he's slumped over, holding his head in his hands, slowly shaking it back and forth.

And I can't do that.

And I realize that I've heard so much fucked up racist shit like that my whole life that if I popped every fucking idiot white-boy punk rocker who said something like "But you're not like *them,*" or, "You don't *seem* Latino though," or whatever other bullshit racist thing they think they're not saying by complimenting me on my perceived whiteness, if I punched them all, my hands would be too fucked up to even type this column.

So I lean in inches from his face and, as calmly as I can muster, say:

"Here's the thing. Right now all I want to do is punch you in the fucking face and smash your nose wide open. But I'm not going to. Because we've been friends for over ten years. But mostly because your brother, my roommate and business partner, is sitting right next to us and I honestly don't want to deal with that. I'm leaving now, and you can go fuck yourself."

I get up from the table, walk out of the bar, hail a cab, and go home.

Fucking punks, man. What the fuck?

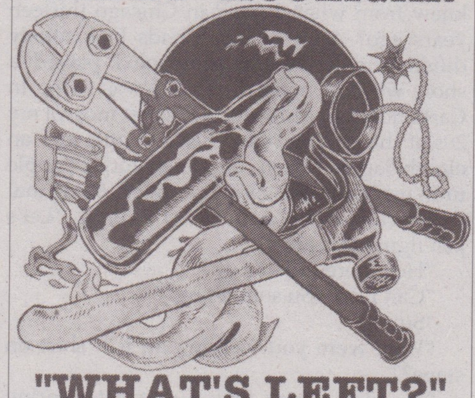
So after weeks of running around the country, meeting people, reconnecting, falling back in love with the insanity that is punk—that are punks—I come back to my city and deal with the wing-nut bullshit of idiots and assholes. 'Cause idiots and asshole are everywhere.

I'd probably love punk a whole lot more if it wasn't for the fucking punks.

But then again, I'm one of them.

So what the fuck does that say about me?

"LEFTY" HOOLIGAN



"WHAT'S LEFT?"

I press the hermitically sealed white envelope to my forehead and say: "The Republican Party." I rip the #10 at one end, blow open the envelope, extract a card and read: "The greatest spectator sport of 2015/16."

It doesn't take an Amazing Kreskin, or Johnny Carson's Carnac the Magnificent, to predict that the real entertainment, the real show in American politics in the next year will be the GOP. I believe the Republicans are in the process of self-destructing, flying apart, having a nervous breakdown, with the real possibility that they will split up into warring factions during the next presidential election. Used to be that the GOP would target the Democratic Party with their vitriol, calling them Loonie Lefties, barking moonbats, or simply just the Democrat Party while forswearing to "never speak ill of a fellow Republican." Now, having limited their ideological base by driving out most moderate Rockefeller Republicans, conservative Republicans reserve their harshest epithets for each other, escalating from Republican In Name Only (RINO), through the self-evident Squish, to the racially charged cuckservative.

A *portmanteau* of cuckold and conservative used by rightwing traditionalists, identitarians and neoreactionaries, cuckservative unfavorably compares mainstream Republican conservatives to a porn fetish in which old white males watch as their "wives/girlfriends" [read: America] have sex with young, often black men. Already torn by the division between Establishment Republicans and Tea Party types, the GOP has something like seventeen official presidential candidates and dozens of factions ranging from libertarians through evangelicals to white supremacists each vying to be "more conservative than thou." The GOP has always had not-so-silent white racists and reactionaries on its fringes. What is clear from the use of cuckservative is that the loudmouthed mainstream candidacy of Donald Trump has given them new life. Only Trump also threatens to mount a third party campaign for the presidency if he is not nominated. Like Ross Perot before him, this may very well splinter the Republicans beyond repair as well as lose them the election.

Now, I spend all of fifteen minutes every two years voting. That's the extent of my involvement with electoral politics. I don't support particular political candidates or parties or issues or campaigns. So my main interest is in being entertained by this country's periodic Democratic/Republican donnybrooks. I like a good, old-fashioned name-calling session; a real, bare-knuckled insult fest with graphic mudslinging and *ad hominem* attacks. But while the Republicans have gotten off to a rollicking start, the Democrats are staid and sadly conventional by comparison.

Aside from prosaic insults like racist, sexist, reactionary or fascist, Democrats have rarely anything more colorful than rightwing wingnut as an aspersion against their Republican rivals. As for internal conflicts, the old disparagements of Dixiecrat or Blue Dog Democrat for conservative Democrats has settled down to the all-inclusive DINO, for Democrat In Name Only, even as the entire Democratic Party has moved decidedly to the right since the heyday of JFK/LBJ liberalism. And when a self-avowed socialist candidate like Bernie Sanders takes on Hillary Clinton's establishment Democratic Party campaign from the left, he is summarily dismissed as a Socialist In Name Only, or SINO.

Fredrik deBoer, a writer for *Jacobin Magazine*, frets about the love-hate relationship between his fellow socialists and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders in a recent *Politico* essay. At one end of the range, he quotes Bruce A. Dixon that: "Bernie Sanders is this election's Democratic sheepdog. … Sheepdogs are herders, and the sheepdog candidate is charged with herding activists and voters back into the Democratic fold who might otherwise drift leftward and outside of the Democratic party." At the other end of the range, he quotes Bhaskar Sunkara who sidesteps the issue of Bernie's socialist credentials by contending that "Sanders is moving the discussion to the left, and mobilizing an absurdly high number of people" and then answers the question of whether Sanders can win: "Yes, definitely. Just not the primary or the presidency. Barry Goldwater didn't win until a couple decades after he ran." This ambivalence toward the Sanders campaign is emblematic of the Left in general and of how, when asked to constitute a firing squad, the Left often forms a circle, guns aimed inward.

Gerard Di Trolio, also a writer for *Jacobin*, argues that the Socialist International and its member social democratic parties are SINO. Me and my left commie pals, we tolerate our anarcho cousins, but we regularly call out both social democrats and Leninists as SINO. I'm sure they return the favor every chance they get, when they're not putting each other down as SINO. And, on the truism that we are frequently most antagonistic toward those we are closest to ideologically, ultraleftists denounce fellow ultraleftists, anarchists denounce fellow anarchists, social democrats denounce fellow social democrats, and Leninists denounce fellow Leninists as SINO, all on the basis of a fraction of a degree of separation in ideology between them. Call it sectarianism, or call it human nature, but the SINO insult is alive and kicking on the Left. As I write this column, members of Black Lives Matter in Seattle shut down a Bernie Sanders rally, later stating: "The problem with Sanders', and with white Seattle progressives in general, is that they are utterly and totally useless (when not outright harmful) in terms of the fight for Black lives. … White progressive Seattle and Bernie Sanders cannot call themselves liberals while they participate in the racist system that claims Black lives. Bernie Sanders will not continue to call himself a man of the people [read: Socialist], while ignoring the plight of Black people."

Okay, so, I've been a tad disingenuous by about ten minutes with regard to my involvement in electoral politics this year. I got our Bernie Sanders for President poster hanging up. Cool "power to the people" red-white-and-blue glossy placard that can be seen from the street. A neighbor asked about it and, this being San Francisco, he now has his own Bernie poster on display. No doubt I will be criticized for even minimally supporting a long-shot presidential candidate residing as I do in a blue state like California where Democrats dominate and where I can afford to waste my vote making a statement. It's not like supporting Bernie Sanders in a red state like Texas, where my sign could get my house egged or worse, or campaigning for him in a swing state like Florida where my vote might cause another Gore/Bush/Nader meltdown. Of course, there is always the argument that, in running, Bernie Sanders helps to move Hillary Clinton to the left in that Sanders himself has no intention of bolting the Democratic Party. But deBoer hopes that the "Sanders campaign [could] potentially do more than pull the inevitable nominee to the left, and actually make a run at the nomination." And, of course, there's that snowball's chance in hell that Bernie might actually win, not just the nomination but the presidency.

That's my purely pragmatic take on American electoral politics. I'll get to commenting in future columns on American electoral politics generally, how European politics compare, theoretical discussions of electoral participation and the like, while the crazy season for the 2016 elections cranks up.

PERSONAL PROPAGANDA... My first novel *End Time* (AK Press, POB 40682, SF, CA 94140-0682), or *Fim* in Portuguese (Conrad Editora, R. Maracaí, 185, Aclimação, 01534-030, São Paulo-SP, Brasil), is out of print. My second novel is in the works. I'm archiving past columns, and publishing current ones on my political blog, www.leftyhooligan.wordpress.com. My personal blog is www.gamatiasz.wordpress.com. I can be contacted at hooligentsia@icloud.com.

BLOWBLOOD
stitches inmy head fanzine @gmail .com

The 10th year of Horrible Fest—now named Not Horrible Fest—graced Cleveland with its destruction this May just past. Although the name-change, it was still along the same lines of what it had been previous years. The infamous hot tub made its return, there was a BBQ and small show outside in the *Now That's Class…!* car lot before the night show, and as always, it was loose and (almost) anything went in the drunken turmoil. The following review is my memory of the weekend as I remember it, which unfortunately, and probably like a lot of people's there, quite vague through all the drinking and things that happened.

On Thursday, the first night, I got to the bar thinking I had to work taking door charge but had gotten the nights mixed up, down to work tomorrow instead. From this newfound freedom I decided to get into party mode, starting the fest with shots of fireball and screwdrivers. Overestimating my drinking capabilities, I was quickly wasted to the point of blackout drunk. SLOTH was on the main stage first. They all wore get-ups with smiley facemasks and repeated *"psycho psycho today"* over and over while holding a sign saying the same thing. It was cult-ishly kooky and absurd. Alessandro, who used to perform with them before departing Cleveland, jumped up on the last song or two and put on a mask, joining in. The next band on the bar stage was a new Cleveland favourite, PERVERTS AGAIN. Minimal stompy punk. They ended with a cover of "Oh Bondage Up Yours" by X-RAY SPEX, which was cool. IVY did a GG ALLIN cover and I enjoyed their interesting tunes and set. FACILITY MEN and FUCK YOU PAY ME also played this night but I didn't watch them. At one point my good housemate noticed how fucked I was and guided me back to our house so I could pass out in peace.

I woke suddenly and early Friday, still drunk, feeling terrible and fully clothed as I was the night before. Memories from the night before came back in dribs and drabs. I walked out of my room and noticed bodies and empty beer cans littering the lounge room. The weather was great and I went to get diner food with some out-of-town friends a little later on when everyone started to wake, then hung out and got to know some other out-of-towners on the front lawn in the sun until the hot tub and BBQ, located in the car park out the back of NTC like previous years, was ready in the late afternoon. Working the door, I only managed to catch the bands that played the bar stage this night. I heard BLACK PANTIES, producing a dirty mid-paced punk, but I couldn't see much over the crowd that had quickly packed out the bar. RUINERS were tight, letting off firecrackers a few times during their set, the singer set up in camo gear. My entry got blocked for a bit when HOMOSTUPIDS played in front of it, so I sat on my bench behind the drummer and watched the show from that angle, other people climbing onto the bar and furniture around the band as well and crowd-surfing a little. They hammered through a set even though their equipment seemed to be constantly dropping in and out. I don't remember catching GARY WONG GROUP, LOW CHARGE or NERVOSAS. I think SWIRLY IN THE FRYER was on first that night and they were fun and dumb. I got off the shift in time to see the SECRET PROSTITUTES who were on last, but although I really like their records, felt defeated and only watched a song up front before going back to the house to eat something. After dealing with people coming through the door all night and feeling shit from the night before, I couldn't get in the mood to party. People came back to our house next door to continue raging and I tried joining but escaped to my bedroom around 4:00 a.m., hoping to catch some proper sleep through all the noise because I was also working the door at the matinee show the next day.

Saturday, Day Three of Not Horrible Fest. And it had been just that, horrible yet great. Getting a lift over to the venue, a warehouse used to build bikes but had cleared the space for the show, I reluctantly stepped inside out of the beautiful spring weather. I spent the next few hours looking at the sun from just inside the entrance door where I heckled people for cash and wristbands upon entry. The show was in the same large room so could listen to everything and watch from over the back of the crowd. It was a solid line-up of bands and I enjoyed all in their own respects, although not being able to pay attention to their sets properly. MEANDERTHALS opened the show. RUBBER MATE were up next and SECRET PROSTITUTES played their second set for the weekend. VATICAN DAGGER and DEPTHS OF REALITY were good quality. VIOLENT END is well put together hardcore I'd seen before and rated highly. I packed it up for FLYIN' TRICHECOS and watched their set from the front, honestly glad to be away from that door and moving around, having some drinks and mingling with people. Alessandro started the set and a local got naked, dancing around while everyone laughed and steered clear of him flailing around. At one point he had a full can of beer lobbed at his nads, which made contact and he crawled off to ice them for the rest of the set. After the TRICHECOS played, I walked over to the Fun Wall skate park a few streets over for the small show there.

BAD NOIDS, fresh back home from their European tour, filled in for CRUELSTER who had to cancel. S.L.I.P, Jimmy Rose's new band, played after them. I sat in a friend's van, which was parked right to the side of where the bands were, so hung out the window drinking and smoking and spending time with friends I hadn't seen in a while. The show ended and I caught a lift back to the bar.

From here I spent half the night complaining that I wasn't drunk enough, hanging out in my kitchen with other people and generally meandering around not putting much effort into seeing the bands. I started doing shots then got too drunk and passed out around 3:00 a.m.. Which would have meant that I passed out after I'd seen all the bands, but I didn't. I missed DIE ROTZZ, and thought GLUE BAG had a lot of good stuff going on. WHATEVER BRAINS didn't play but FOLDED SHIRT did instead. I remember seeing them and thinking that they were amazing, all their songs put together so awkwardly but at the same time flowing so well. One of my favourite bands that weekend. RUNNING was heavy, continuous, fast-paced, loud and intrusive noise but interesting and going somewhere instead of all over the place. The crowd seemed blown away by what they put out. Disappointingly, I missed TIMMY'S ORGANISM and GG KING.

My eyes opened at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, and I remembered straight away that I'd woken up in the middle of the night and peed on my bedroom floor. I jumped up, grabbed the pillow my piss was soaked in, and quickly walked outside in disgust of myself to throw it in the bin. I looked over the fence and people were at the bar, so I went over to join them. I'd missed the part of the festival I had been looking forward to most—the basement after-party show and 6 am bar show—when things would have been most wild. Anyone that hadn't slept was at the bar and completely lucid. An amazing mess. I was in the bar ordering a bloody mary and "Ain't it fun" by ROCKETS FROM THE TOMBS came on over the juke box. The sun is shining in the door but the bar was trashed and dark, and I felt like shit sipping on this refreshing tomato juice. It was a good moment to end the weekend. I don't really remember what happened after that, I guess everybody that wasn't from Cleveland started to peel away and head back to their hometowns as stories started to surface of things that had happened over the weekend (sex in the hot tub, broken TVs in the basement, fights or people getting beat up, etc.). The weekend flew by in a blur and like every Horrible Fest (or at least every one I've been to), it was a wild and loose mess with no standards and only the best time to be had, no matter how horrible you felt at the end.

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Some friends from Cleveland and myself made the six-hour drive from Ohio and across the border into Canada to see Belgium's ultimate *Killed By Death* punk band, THE KIDS! They were performing at The Garrison in Toronto on Friday 5th June 2015, supported by PROXY, VALLEY BOYS and TEENANGERS

VALLEY BOYS were on first. At the start it reminded me a bit of THE MARKED MEN but slightly more abrasive. Melodic punk but a little rougher around the edges. They were good live and had a decent crowd there for first act on.

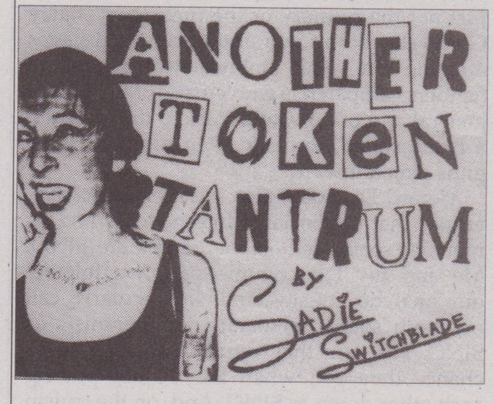
At first skeptical, but I quickly turned around on TEENANGER, who were the next local support on the bill. For me, it sounded like THE SAINTS, vocals in particular, but a bit darker musically. It had a very Australian proto-punk vibe and I really dug it. People up the front and spotted around the crowd were having a dance and enjoying these more simple but interesting punk tunes. At this point the venue was packing out a bit more with a variety of different characters here for the different sounding supports and all with a love for classic punks, the KIDS.

TEENANGER finished and I bought some PROXY and the KIDS merch before it got any busier. Otherwise, I spent time between bands hanging out the front with the Cleveland people I drove up with. The show was running behind at this point. It was almost 12:00 a.m. and PROXY still had to play before the KIDS ended the night.

PROXY is great street punk from Montreal, taking influence off a hard rock and English punk sounds from thirty years ago. Their set was a riot, people pushing each other around, throwing beer, jumping off the stage and falling over each other. All the while security were trying to get in the middle of it all and threaten people crowd surfing and jumping from the stage with being ejected for fooling around. PROXY also covered the RAMONES's "Today Your Love, Tomorrow the World." All up, a great set!

And finally, the band we drove six hours into another country to see, the KIDS! There were two original members and two filling in. The two newer members were a bit reserved, seeming to make sure not to take the spotlight. The two original members, however, were rocking out hard! Screaming at the top of their lungs, jumping around with rock'n'roll stage antics and keeping it entertaining the whole way through. They played songs off both their albums, and mid-set did a WIRE cover. The set ended with the classics—"This is Rock'n'Roll" and "Fascist Cops"—then caved into crowd demand and did a one-song encore. However, as great as the set was that I'd just seen, I was already on the way out the door and continued even when I heard them plugging back in. All up every support band was top quality for their particular punk genre, and the KIDS did not disappoint! I've seen my fair share of bands that have reformed, as I'm sure you all have, and can say more often than not they tend to put on a lackluster performance, instead riding off the name recognition of an energy and records they put out decades ago. But the KIDS were awesome!!!!

The show finished just before 2:00 a.m., and we hit the road straight away, getting back into Cleveland early morning Saturday. *Worth it!*



"I ain't seen genius, I just seen passion
And there's no gifts from heaven,
and there's no point in waitin'
for some kinda lesson
It's time you start creatin'
Anything you want that's in your heart
Anything you want, you can't go wrong."
—Future Virgins

I was recently lucky enough to witness DC hardcore troopers PURE DISGUST on their big honkin' U.S. tour, part of a package deal with two other male-fronted hardcore bands HARD STRIPES and BARGE. They played at Old School Pizzeria here in Olympia at like midnight and blew everyone away (I'm not sure if you know this, but now that I have a column in *MRR* I get to speak for "everyone," LOL). First HARD STRIPES delivered the goods, very catchy mid-tempo HC with some bounce to it and a kind of metallic guitar tone, in the vein of I don't fucking know because honestly I don't really care *but* they were cute and friendly so hey that's what counts right!? Seriously though this band was sick as hell, their 7" rips, and their singer was super nice and didn't even get mad when I was standing on top of their merch like an asshole.

That was another cool thing about this show, I showed up steeped in sour feelings, imprisoned in baby jail over some shit and just didn't want to be involved with humans at all but was greeted by the sickest mean-girl crew who immediately started talking shit on everyone in sight, bought me beer, and generally made me feel so much better about myself. Thanks ladies, you know who you are! But yeah I got to stand on a table in the back, with my little purse and side-pony and "ARM TRANS WOMEN" crewneck, watching dumb boys (ok and some smart, nice boys TBH) run into each other and hurt themselves. I guess I was feeling raw and sensitive anyway but I had a total T-Girl Mome being like "OMG I am finally the girl with the handbag standing on the table!" I even held Jake's shirt he bought, lol! IT'S COOL THOUGH, REALLY like Jake I wanted to hold your shirt dog, I wanted to facilitate your mosh. But I guess this means I'm a coat-rack and not a feminist anymore?! I guess I hate feminism anyway honestly and am more of a femme-inist but yeah, idk. Anyway what the fuck was I talking about? Oh yeah HARD STRIPES, good band, great 7", nice boys.

BARGE played next and were pretty rippin', I don't remember a ton about their set other than that the guitarist had like a Eddie Van Halen-style leopard print guitar and was doing a lot of divebombs and pinch harmonics, bless him. Not the most tasteful thing but I found it endearing and more on the "cute" end of the "cute <--> douchey" spectrum.

PURE DISGUST was sick as hell and had so much energy. They kind of pull from many modes of punk like Oi!, DC hardcore, New York hardcore, etc., and come up with their own thing that feels genuine and explosive. Honestly, that song "Denied," and some of their other songs too, *really* sound like early PENNYWISE to me! I don't think that's a bad thing! Like seriously just listen to "Fight 'Til You Die" by PENNYWISE and imagine hardcore vocals over it instead of the Epi-Fat singing and that's sort of what PURE DISGUST is like, imo. Except like yeah PURE DISGUST is obviously a good band and the singer doesn't wear sunglasses inside as far as I know. Be sure to pick up their new EP *Chained* if there are still copies available, it's incredibly good and more relevant than most hardcore being played today.

If the popularity of bands like PURE DISGUST, DOWNTOWN BOYS, SHEER MAG etc. is any indication, it seems that maybe, finally, the tired, mangled corpse of the Weird Creep is finally writhing across basements for the last time, and punk is headed for a new era that prioritizes emotionality, lyrical content, and genuine rage over apathetic detachment. An era that is engaged with its surroundings, that is invested, relevant, topical, not hiding behind a feigned disenchantment. Because I think right now we are cresting on a new moment in punk created by members of disenfranchised minorities like people of color, trans people, queers and women. Lots of people can't Drop Out Of Life. Lots of people can't hide behind their "otherness"—they're targeted for it. Hardcore from the '90s and early '00s is often derided for its sincerity, but when we traded zine tables and newprint inserts in for chains, slime, and blogs, we maybe lost some perspective on what separates punk from rock, punks from norms. In the madness to delve into YouTube punk history and act out our closest approximation of "real punk", we have ironically lost sight of what makes punk real: its immediacy, relevance, and vulnerability. Our quest for authenticity has stripped the authenticity from our music. In 2016 I want to see bands with passion, bands that take an alienated, hurt feeling and make it huge. I want to see bands that derive intensity from genuine feelings, not in spite of them.

DOWNTOWN BOYS is exactly that type of a band, and they have rightfully been garnering buckets of attention for their rebellious noise. I can say without exaggeration that DOWNTOWN BOYS is the best band I have ever seen. And I've seen, y'know, probably thousands of good bands! Their recorded output is wonderful but doesn't begin to do them justice...you just have to witness them live. There's a distinctive "DOWNTOWN BOYS EXPERIENCE" and I swear to god it's like a new fucking frontier of punk. They strip away the self-deprecation of most of the genre without throwing the self-critique out with the bath water, calling everyone in to the revolutionary space they create and shooting everyone back out on the other side of their sonic solar system, rejuvenated, ready to tear shit down. I have seen this band several times and have stood in the back with tears welling in my eyes each time. This is what it felt like to be thirteen and hear a real punk band for the first time. I hope the coming years hold fewer sub-sub-genre historical reenactments and more risk-takers like DOWNTOWN BOYS. I understand that genre gives bands form and something to work within, it's just that I want to see more punk infused with deep human experience, the kind DOWNTOWN BOYS brings to the table.

I'll take a paragraph here to shout out solo-act OLIVIA NEUTRON-JOHN, whose long-player is an out of this world experience. I guess this is a year old, but it's new to me. The record consists of a 22-minute song backed with a 15-minute song and both are seriously addictive I've been listening to it in the background on repeat while writing this column. Reviewer Ian Svenonius called this music "raw, glittering, psychedelic...a non-binary, post-bro one-person music/dance declaration of war on the accepted and the expected." I'm not really familiar with most dance music or electronic music so I don't feel I can really speak to what this shit is about, but all I know is that it fucking rules and I feel totally entranced by it. If you need a break from punk and have some time on your hands, dig in and give this a try, it's propulsive and phenomenal.

G.L.O.S.S. will be on tour across America from August 31st through October 13th. Come say hi! This is a six-week jammer and we are hitting up pretty much every region of the country. We'll have the 7" version of our demo finally, as well as a teaser cassingle with two songs from our forthcoming second EP. If they show up in time, we'll also be selling a cassette comp I helped put together called *It Gets Weirder*, which features thirty diverse bands from Olympia, with "punk" as the loose unifier. G.L.O.S.S. has an exclusive track on there that you won't find anywhere else.

We booked three dates in Canada which all look incredible, but the motherfucking State is making it impossible for me to get a passport or even an enhanced ID to cross the border, so it remains to be seen if we'll make it or not. Somehow a Massachusetts driver's license, social security card, name change certificate, old passport, birth certificate copy, WA state concealed carry permit, and internet bill with my name and address on it are not enough for those fuckhead gatekeepers to give me the proper shit to get across the border. So those of you in Canada, if we don't get to rock together, blame the transphobic pigs. Fucking bastards.

One more bit of self-promotion (I'm a worthless fucking shit-merchant, I know!) I recently finished recording my solo project, DYKE DRAMA. If you like heartbroken mom-rock straight from the dollar bin—real sad, dykey alt-country/*Singles* soundtrack crap like LUCINDA WILLIAMS or PAUL WESTERBERG (without the misogyny)—well, this is for all zero of you. The record is called *Tender Resignation* and is being released by Salinas Records as a 12" EP in late fall. Jason Brownstein told me that it sounds like "a cross between BENT OUTTA SHAPE and GOO GOO DOLLS" which, if you know me, is like the highest possible praise, so thank you Jason! I'm extremely excited to have something out on Salinas, a label that I've always loved, and I'm humbled to share that space with amazing peers like TRY THE PIE, JOYRIDE!, DELAY, HEY HALLWAYS, ALL DOGS, RADIATOR HOSPITAL, and the STATE LOTTERY, to name some of my favorites.

That wraps it up for this month. Don't be afraid to talk to each other out there. Everyone is alienated, everyone needs a human connection. If you see a kid with a studded belt, say hi to them. Give them a flier, or a tape. Make punk personal and vulnerable again! I'll see you babies on the road.

Instruments 101

Have you ever been to Ungdomshuset–Dortheavej 61 in Copenhagen? Well you should go, because I really love this place. It felt important to me to share a little more than just a name with you all, and bring out one of the people behind this place. I met Mette in 2014, when I made it to the K-town Hardcore Fest for the first time. I had a blast, but I also noticed that one person was moving all the gear, dealing with the sound mix behind the desk, and making it easy and fun to everybody to enjoy the shows. I was impressed. My band had the privilege of playing at Dortheavej 61 this year, and this time I had quite some time to talk with Mette. We stayed in touch since then and I thought that it would be a great idea to ask her some questions. As you will read, she is a real smart person, so she was kind enough to talk about the local scene or Ungdomshuset, but she also came out with some great advices on setting up the sound at a punk gig.

Introduction

Describing yourself is always hard… I'm twenty-five years old and I've lived in Copenhagen since I was two. I discovered punk when I was an angsty fifteen-year-old listening to mainstream alt-rock bands that would name bands like Black Flag as their inspirations. I remember looking up Black Flag on Google and I was hooked on the music and lyrical content.

Ten years on, I'm involved in the DIY punk/hardcore scene around Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen. I work professionally as a sound technician while studying Performance Arts Design in Malmö, Sweden.

Danish Punk Scene

I've been involved in the punk scene around Ungdomshuset since 2007, when the old house was evicted. There was a lot of activity going on then. I've been doing sound since I was seventeen, in 2008. Before that I would help set up the occasional show and volunteer at the bar or door at other shows.

I have been the main person coordinating the volunteer sound group at Ungdomshuset for some time now, and I have just stepped down from that position to focus on my education and so-called "career" (so not punk, I know). I have been the person taking most of the sound shifts for many years now and it's time for me to be able to focus my energy on other stuff. I'll still do sound at the occasional show, but I'll be more picky. Apart from that, I'll set up a show if the right band comes along, and I'm a part of organizing the K-town Hardcore Fest at Ungdomshuset.

The punk scene can be strong here, but I wish the punk scene could sustain itself. Like anywhere else, most people won't or can't do their part to keep it running. It is hard work to keep everything afloat and it can be pretty ungrateful sometimes. But there're also a lot of amazing people in the DIY punk scene worldwide, and that makes up for the hard times.

Ungdomshuset

Well, to make a long story short: The municipal government handed over the old Ungdomshuset at Jagtvej 69 to the youth in 1982. They then sold the place in 1999. It ended up in the hands of the far-right Christian church Faderhuset, whose leader claimed that God spoke to her and told her to buy Ungdomshuset. Ungdomshuset was evicted and torn down in 2007, and sold the ground. The ground still stands empty, but there are plans to build expensive stores and apartments there.

There were demonstrations every week following the eviction, and ultimately the municipal government agreed to hand over a new house. The new Ungdomshuset opened in the fall of 2008 on Dortheavej 61.

The spirit of Ungdomshuset is to be an alternative to the mainstream world surrounding us. Ungdomshuset is based on DIY-ethics, direct democracy, anti-authoritarianism and personal freedom. The crew includes people from all kinds of different backgrounds, but most are based in the punk scene. I was sucked into the scene after the eviction of Jagtvej 69 in 2007. A lot of new, young people were getting involved back then. Most of them left long ago, but some of us stuck around. I've been a part of the new house from day one and I learned a lot of skills just building the bar and stage and creating a self-governed DIY house from scratch.

Go to dortheavej-61.dk/english-info if you want to read more about Ungdomshuset and its background.

K-town Fest

I've been doing sound at K-town Hardcore Fest since it restarted in 2011. This year I got more involved in planning the festival as a whole, and it's been a hard but rewarding experience. This year we've had so much attention that we had to have a ticket pre-sale. It's amazing to be part of something that has become so popular, but also kind of frightening. Unfortunately we don't have the physical space for everyone wanting to come to the festival. I feel like we've grown into a festival that offers a package of great hardcore bands, good food, a safer environment and fun daytime activities like the collective zine workshop and the bike wars.

It's hard to name just a few acts. Doing sound most of the time, I normally forget which bands and shows I've seen and what bands sound like, so pointing out some bands as favorites isn't fair. But NEIGHBORHOOD BRATS' set last year and NO PROBLEM's this year were some highlights for me.

Sound Person

I learned sound in a very DIY way. I followed experienced sound technicians on their shifts. They would teach me how everything worked and give tips on how to do good sound. This was in 2008 before the new Ungdomshuset existed, so shows would be at different spaces around the city. When Ungdomshuset opened I started doing sound on my own. Not being experienced at all, that was pretty stressful and I probably didn't do a very good job, haha. But I learned a lot that way and improved quickly. I would evolve as a sound technician by doing sound myself, and I even had to learn about things like compressors by reading about them and then testing them myself. I learn new sound techniques by reading about them or watching a video and then testing it myself.

Sound is a hands-on thing. You can't just read a book on mixing and become good at mixing that way. You need to get your hands dirty, experiment and have some bad experiences to improve. You don't learn how to handle feedback if you have never been in a situation with feedback.

Setting Up the Sound at a Punk Gig

I normally do full set-ups where I mic everything. Even at the small 150-person capacity concert space Dödsmaskinen in Ungdomshuset, we have microphones on drums and guitar and bass cabinets.

My best advice would be to find out what you need to mic and what you don't need to mic. I've seen people struggle with overhead microphones for the drums in a place like Dödsmaskinen, where it isn't needed, and waste a lot of energy on that.

I think drums are very important in the mix. Even at smaller gigs, I would mic the bass drum because it tends to be hard to hear over everything else, depending on its tuning and the drummer. There are special microphones for bass drums, but you can really stick anything into the bass drum if needed, and it will work. Just adjust the equalizer on the mixer, and you'll probably be fine on a small PA.

The balance of guitar and bass amps is important too, even if you mic the cabinets. A trick is to slightly angle the cabs, so the speakers aren't blasting directly at the audience. But generally guitar and bass are easy to adjust. Don't be afraid to ask guitarists and bassists to turn down their amps.

Vocals can be the hardest because the audience mostly cares about hearing the vocals. If your PA isn't very powerful, it can be hard to make the vocals loud enough and not get drowned out by everything else. Many singers cup the microphone with their hands, not realizing they're destroying the sound, because they have seen someone else do it and think it looks "cool".

In terms of improving the quality of the vocals, and anything else, I would say that the equalizer is the most important tool. Learn how to work with that and how to cut out the nasty frequencies. The best method is to sweep the equalizer. Boost the gain and then slowly turn the equalizer's frequency knob. Cut out the frequency that sounds the nastiest—you'll know when you've found it!

Generally cut the mids to make the sound less muddy, boost the lows for power and maybe boost the highs for point or clarity. But remember not to boost the same frequencies on everything in the mix—you don't want to make things compete in the same frequency area. A trick to making something more audible in the mix is to boost a certain frequency and cut that frequency on whatever is drowning out that thing. For example, if the vocals are hard to hear, you could boost 4kHz on the vocals and cut 4kHz on the guitars – that you would even be able to do on the guitar amp's treble equalizer knob if you're not micing the guitars.

I like adding some reverb to the vocals and some to the snare drum and toms. You'll want to add some reverb to add some depth and space to the mix. But remember to keep in mind what genre you're mixing. There's nothing worse than a post-punk snare reverb on a hardcore band! Not thinking musical genres into mixing is one of the most common mistakes. It can really ruin a show for me when you get a sound technician that knows nothing about punk/hardcore to mix punk/hardcore bands. It never sounds right.

Feminism

Well, the punk scene should include feminism. To me feminism is about equal rights, equal opportunities and anti-oppression, which are important punk ideals to me. I'm not really involved in the feminist scene as a separate thing, but I see feminism as an integrated part of the punk scene.

Some people think that me being a sound technician and a woman is about feminism, which it isn't. It's not a political thing to me at all. I don't think about my gender in these situations, I just love to do sound. Other people tend to focus on it a lot, with both positive and negative reactions to it. I experience tokenism a lot, where I'm treated as something special and not as just another sound technician. I get asked to do shows because I'm a woman, which I always turn down. I want to be acknowledged for what I do and not what's between my legs. I have taken paying jobs for financial reasons, where they were looking for a woman. It sucks, but I have to pay my rent. Fortunately these jobs have led to other jobs based on my skills and competence.

The distribution of males and females playing in bands within the punk scene is uneven, but it's even more uneven when it comes to those working with sound. It's like that in the outside world as well, it's not something special for the punk scene, and it's something that should change. Just the term "sound guy" is stupid—and it's even more stupid when people inside the punk scene don't know how to address me because I'm obviously doing sound but I'm not a guy.

I want more women to be able to be involved in sound and there are not many opportunities for women to do that. That's why I made a workshop. One woman who participated in the workshop is continuing to do sound at Ungdomshuset, so I think it reached the goals I had.

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BRACE BELDEN is THE LAST PUNK

"My God, I'm a man who enjoys a good massage."

—Albert Camus, unpublished letter to his mother.

Who doesn't! I don't, really (enjoy massages) but besides me—who else? The masseuse, maybe, but as my boss says: "If you don't like your job, quit! No one'll miss you!" and that's true, I suppose (at least the second point is an absolute truth; the first is relative). By and large, those with muscles that need kneading and those with legs that need a hand-chopping, they enjoy massages. Many are even excited by the *thought* of a massage! Go ahead, pose the question to your coworkers. Ask them, in a tone that implies you will *not be the one administering it*, if they would like a massage. Behold! Beaming faces, smiles as big as grandfather's cock, breathy "Yes"es and vigorous nodding. You see how something so intangible as anticipation of pleasure can make one feel? My God. Man was meant to lie on his back and pluck grapes with his teeth from the servile hands of some catamite boy-slave who's peculiar genetic makeup predisposes him to take pleasure & purpose from the feeding of supine Bacchanalians. What a world!

Of course, life itself is often an empty, joyless slog down endless boulevards peopled with disappointments and boxed in by towering houses filled with the restless spirits of all those who might betray you. God, I can sympathize with the first man who made up Heaven, with the toga-wearing charlatans who cribbed the idea of Eden from some slaughtered pagans cave drawing. I think about Heaven often; I construct and inhabit it in the space of a night's sleep, my dreams giving life to a desire that is almost innate in humanity, a desire for Paradise. No work, yet none of the weary ennui that comes from a life of loafing. No hatred, no enemies, no fear of duplicity or of assault. No rape and no murder, no vicious dogs nor dead ones. The world is a terrifying place! How could we not have invented heaven? How could we not tease ourselves with everlasting bliss? Especially one that follows up that most dreadful and incomprehensibly terrifying period-point in all our lives: death. What a great idea to have Heaven come next!

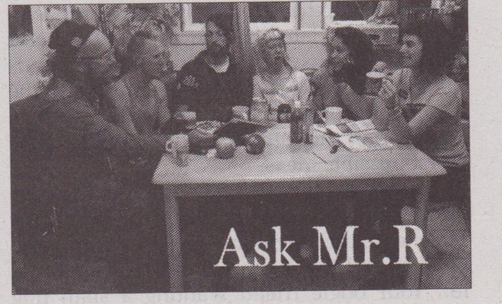
A realm in which all desires are granted, at which all is permitted, all needs met and all that worry, all those troubled nights you've lain awake with eyes like cake-plates with just a bit of old chocolate in the center, the goosepimples on the arms and ulcers in the stomach, all forgotten and worth it, for God is real and he holds your hand in His. I don't even believe in Him and still I worry, as I am like you, I have a set of morals emblazoned on sacred tablets whose words I fail to live up to but try when I can. Even I, a sane and stable thoroughly modern man, find myself lapsing into reveries where I play pretend that all this work and all my mistakes and apologies add up to something holy. A born delusional!

If you should be home for the Summer, staying with your parents, and open a bathroom door to find your brother masturbating to an iPhone, don't say a word. Close the door, softly as you can, slowly so as not to scare him, and smile to yourself. Swallow vomit and repress revulsion. Does your brother not spend a moment or two each day wishing he were dead? Does the tyranny of morality not shackle him and squeeze his heart? There is absolutely 100% nothing wrong with viewing pornography and masturbating to completion in the bathroom of a family home. Let your brother cum on the floor, on the wall, in his hand, on the mirror! Let him strive to drown in his own cum, to choke on it and bathe in it. He won't; there are limits to what a man can produce, but he can try. As long as it gives him pleasure.

I would never slap a man's hands if I catch him in prayer. I would never snatch a binky from a baby's little mouth. If I find anyone, anywhere, sucking a dick, I leave them be. No need for interference. Live and let live. If someone is giving—or receiving—pleasure, then, by God, that person is a living Saint. Let all nipples be twisted and every foot be grated by a Ped Egg handled with a loving hand. All parents should have sex every night. All children should watch cartoons all Saturday long. Will these things happen? Of course not. Barring the isolated cases one could imagine exist out there, these are impossible dreams. Interruptions abound; what is life, after all, if not an interruption of the pleasure of the dreamless sleep of the womb and the dark rest of the grave? Seek out whatever happiness you can in this cursed interim!

What is it to me if you wish to fuck a dog? If you choose to spend your stolen moments in a MDMA trance? If you fish or hunt? I must be pragmatic. I am a speck of dirt on the bottom of God's high-heels. I am a tooth in the mouth of a Servant of Heaven. I am nothing, you are nothing, so our interactions, no matter how consequential they may seem, amount to zilch. If I choose to venerate Baal and slaughter cats in the night—what is that to you? Reprehensible? Disgusting? Yes! But don't you get a thrill when repulsed? Doesn't the hot flash of anger provide soothing warmth? Outrage is a joy! Seek it out. Sniff it out like it's a gas leak. Huff the glue of anger and relax into the warm bosom of disgust.

We're all of us just pleasure seekers bumping into each other in the dark. If you want to wail about how I'm a piece of shit, that's your pleasure. If you want to whine like a sick dog, that's your pleasure. I keep a loaded pistol next to my bed and I would be ecstatic to use any excuse to put a hole in any motherfucker that wishes to walk up the stairs into my home, invited or not. I won't say anything of that. I say this: Take pleasure where you can.



Ask Mr.R

I don't think anyone should take advice, but there are probably a lot of things for the punks to talk about, and we might as well do it here. Think of it more as an opinion column though. (And if we need a tagline for that I hope it can be something as vague as: "A column for people who are intrigued by the subtle differences between the "punks" and the "punx.")

Text a question to 510-585-HELP (510-585-4357)! Apparently you can also call that number and leave a message like a weirdo, or just send a good ol' fashioned email to: AskMRR@mail.com. Oh, and PS, if you are sending a question that is time sensitive, let me know so that I can get you a *timely response!*

My neighbor is a nice dude, always friendly and kind. But he sucks to his dog. He keeps his pitbull outside and she is always filthy and attention starved, and sometimes she has untreated wounds. She is sweet as hell and always wants to visit and lick me, and I want to arrange for a friend to dognap her. This is fucked up, right? You should never steal someone's dog, whether they never walk her or not. Plus, he would just get another one. What should I do?

Since every option for dealing with this situation is going to have some fucked up aspects (varying more or less based on your house/life situation and comfort/safety levels), but we are in total agreement that something should be done for the dog, we can just weigh all the possibilities and you can think about what would work the actual best for you. Like, I suppose *talking* to the person is *technically* an option, since you said that this guy is always friendly and kind, but I suspect that his demeanor will change very quickly once you suggest that he is a selfish dog abuser. Maybe I'm paraphrasing and you have a plan to say it in a super chill way that I'm not taking into consideration since you are the one who knows this guy and not me, but honestly, I would not expect this to be the most effective way to handle the situation at all.

I *want* "talking about it" to be the answer to most things, but generally when a person is being forced to see themselves in a negative light, they become more likely to decide someone is simply "out to get them" than they are to deal with the idea that they might actually be doing anything wrong. Of course, some people might be able to be very upfront, deal with the fallout, and end with a positive situation, but, before you decide that you are one of these people, most importantly, take into consideration that this will erase any chance you'll have of trying anything else anonymously later (if you think this might become a necessary strategy). If the dog ends up missing, you are obviously going to be the culprit after having a conversation about it. And I don't think that stealing the dog is the worst possible idea.

If you steal the dog, do not forget that you are putting yourself in charge of its future. Make sure the new home includes walks and petting, and that open wounds will be cared for. Your oogle friend wanting a sixth dog at the house doesn't make it the best fit. If you're going to steal the dog, make sure that it is better off, for real. Keep in mind that the dog might be microchipped. If there are open wounds that need to be treated, a vet may scan this chip and the dog might end up back at home with the owner anyway.

Another common suggestion people will make is to call Animal Protective Services. My presumption had always been that they go to the person's house and take the animal, the animal ends up in a shelter where it will hopefully be adopted, but if it isn't, it will most likely be put to sleep. I was surprised to find out that this is apparently only in the case of extreme abuse or animal hoarding. In instances of animal neglect, the standard procedure is that a person shows up at the house, checks on the animal first, issues a ticket, and gives the owner a chance to make changes before a follow-up visit. If no changes are made, the owner has the choice of surrendering the animal or serving jail time and losing the animal anyway. I would generally never even make mention of an option that suggests calling on people in positions of authority to handle our issues for us, especially ones that threaten jail time. Even inflicting the financial burden of a ticket on a person isn't something that you should decide casually. I know that things are more complicated when you're worrying about the welfare of an animal unable to help itself, but it's still important to have thought about the choices you will be making and the ways in which the people and dog will be affected. Make your own judgment calls. No easy answers here. Feel free to ask your friends what they would do or have done. This kind of shit happens all the time, so you'll probably get a lot of anecdotal experiences to think about. With any luck, you'll know one of those people who claim that they "would just beat the shit out of that guy." Have them over for dinner! (Don't do that.)

Sorry to anyone who came here expecting punk fashion answers! We'll get back to them next month, and until then, I assure you, you all look very, very cool. Unsolicited Bonus Fashion Advice!: Buy or shoplift the pyramid studded things for sale at the Target while you can. You'll be glad to have them once punk is stupid again! Send in all of your pressing and non-pressing punk questions in text form to 510-585-HELP. Send in email form to: AskMRR@mail.com.

SPLATTER ZONE

WITH MARISSA MAGIC

I was at a bar. I was seeing Downtown Boys, they played a cover, they had a lot of in between banter, it was so articulate, it was so on point, the band seemed to make such perfect space around it that I wondered if it was rehearsed. I thought about this and realized it actually didn't matter at all. I've been stuck on realness and authenticity lately. I wrote this zine with the mission and idea to write fake interviews with famous men that I had classically avoided reading interviews with. I had meant to try to make these men not fucked up but all I ended up doing was mainly having a conversation about authenticity with myself. And I was at this show and this powerful stuff, these wonderful ideas are being conveyed to the audience and I'm wondering if it's rehearsed. So I realized, or I thought, or whatever, who cares? Or, I mean, does it matter? The fact that authenticity or "realness" is wrapped up in spontaneity is a little absurd. Writing down and memorizing and repeating your truths can't make them less true.

And I think in this context, one maybe two people with a microphone, pumped crowd; it's a power dynamic that has equal potential to be exhilarating and fucking terrifying or even just run of the mill kind of shitty. The power of the person holding the microphone is undeniable and possibly dangerous. How many times have we seen bands that spewed some awful bullshit into the mic and everyone cheers along? Or even people just blurting shit out before they think about what they are saying could mean. Or trying to make a point, you ramble, lose your way, accidentally word something in a fucked up way. And what I mean is maybe in this way it's better to have things rehearsed to some degree. You have this kind of startling amount of power, especially in the context of punk. For a lot of us our main activities kind of revolve around shows. You have this power, it seems better to know the point you are trying to make and how you're going to get to it. Maybe? Being in a room where everyone vocally agrees with the person on stage can feel fucking awesome but it also can be mega creepy. Maybe the realness is more true when you've figured out exactly how to express it.

Victoria of Downtown Boys was telling a story about her grandmother confronting some bullies and then she was saying that sometimes you get this weird feeling, feeling negative about yourself and that you should look that feeling in the face and say no to it. Say no to that weird feeling. I keep getting older and less and less interested in being tough or badass or even better than anyone else. I can't get rid of my resting bitch face and as I understand it people still find me very intimidating. I had to write a bunch of lyrics and I started in on them on the tail of this major jackass incident that I pulled (like I was the jackass) that I felt ultra guilty about. I wrote all of these lyrics basically talking about how much I sucked, how much of a waste of space I am. In this jackass incident, I fucked up. I feel bad but wallowing in it has no use. Maybe it's better to harness the bullshit and push myself to be a better person. I look at the world and see how unrelentingly awful it is and then that I'm a part of it. Everything is awful and overwhelming. Is there a use to allowing it to take over?

I lost my job and now I'm getting unemployment ("art grant"). The weirdness of feeling useless because I'm not doing anything toward my capitalist wealth. I do badly sans structure so I started volunteering at this library. They have a garden and for some reason put me in charge of it. I don't know shit about gardening, so now I just have to figure it out. I get ready to go as I'm realizing that I don't give volunteering at the library a lot of worth because I don't make money there. My commitment wavers, I'm hungover, maybe I stay in bed. This square started showing up to work in the garden Saturday mornings at the same time as I do. I'm uninterested in talking to her and maybe she thinks I'm a bitch. I was used to stumbling through the act of gardening alone, fumbling around plants, feeling the thrill of pulling food out of soil, the meditation of pruning. I'm alone so I don't feel the sting of looking stupid because I know little to nothing about this shit. I don't wanna hear about this woman's husband or what she bought at Target. Max points out that at my job I had to deal with working alongside squares all the time and it was fine. But I was getting paid. I'm willing to deal with a lot more shit if I'm getting paid. Getting paid. I find myself questioning my general worth to society because I'm not making money right now. Are my parents disappointed? Does this matter? This is a subject I seem to return to a good amount. Is it because I grew up middle class? What is the meaning of being worthwhile to society? Is it worthwhile to be worthwhile to society? I go and dig around in this garden and pretend to know what I'm doing. I get over the question of worthlessness and it just feels fucking cool. I figure out how to appreciate this square because she is at those moments in the garden using her free time in the same way I am. I'm not better than her, our goals just don't line up. We both give a shit about this garden.

I drag this feeling of simple understanding and positivity and don't let it go. It paints the streets and infiltrates my home. It becomes infinitely clearer that feeling dark and cynical about the world isn't helping anyone and I believe it is possible to be angry and to stay positive. I believe in love and love is a powerful thing. It's a challenge to reject nihilism and being happy somehow seems fake. Being in the garden matters even though I don't get paid and this square is alright, just different. I'm holding onto love and a positive mental attitude, I'm saying no to that weird feeling.

VIKTOR
VARGYAI
AWKWARD
RAGING

Don't ever worry, punk does have a meaning. After all, everything does, even then if this so called message isn't dragged down to a disgracing level of idiot proof, vibrating neo advertisement. Punk carries it as humbly as Jesus carried his cross to the top of Golgotha. All eyes are on us. Or Jesus was a communist? Did communists have a meaning? I should ask my parents. Excuse me history, that was the Soviet Union, state socialism, Stalinism, total dictatorship, Totalitär, something-something. So power hungry people had meaning and it was called communism. They needed an idea as a subject for their predicate. That predicate was: everything will be better if you do as we say. If you don't then you are against the good-will, you are bad, *au revoir.*

Just as pop needs the execution of silence as a subject to give us joyful sounds, cheap tricks for an easy satisfaction, similarly punk (bedroom noise created as a hobby) needs *meaning* as a subject. By this, punk could believe it is more and the practice of this belief convinces others too that this might be something more. Mimicking sense is the melody of punk; and what do we do? We nod our heads to the illusion of us knowing it better while we are just wrapped in conformable self righteousness. Do we even know what we don't know? It's sad but when the bitter taste of this sorrow vanishes it gets almost as fun as when disco dancers shake their shaped butts to melancholic songs about buying things. Everybody believes everything will be better.

Contrary to my cynicism punk does have a meaning but it doesn't have to be articulated verbally. Punk is a musical genre and its attribute is having something to say. Music first, message second. Wait, no. Music has to carry message? No, music has to be about something and that's the message. But this something doesn't have to be said through words. This might be abstract, it is not easy but art is not easy. It's something more. Why be something more that you are not? We are! In a meaningless life confusion is the wood used to tinker a roof. But this roof in punk has to be a risk, at least this should not be a lie because life itself is unsafe, incomprehensible, confusing, disappointing. It is even though myriads of words were sacrificed on the altar of sense to get a bit closer to understand human existence, still those concrete umbrellas have no place here.

I'm from a place where for decades to stay silent about something meant that you are telling everything. We had the number fifty six deleted from our collective minds. This made everyone think about this number. So if you had counted like fifty four, fifty five, silence, fifty seven then this incomplete set of numbers would have been a brave criticism of the authority. Today it would only tell that you are cursed with bad skills in counting.

I sometimes wish that punk would be silent about some things. About things we either don't understand or don't care enough about to spend the time to understand. I'm still talking about verbal expressions. We are gifted with being able to express ourselves sonically. You can also go wrong with that and probably you would be better off with a library pass than with a Bad Religion discography. This here too is a rip off of writers not musicians.

Punk is frustrated about problems—let it be anything. Our focus is directed on problems but it does not mean that we have to solve these indicators of our noise. Punk won't solve problems. Unlike Jesus, even if this is dead it won't take away anyone's sins, although the will to succeed is our duty. It's a Sisyphean case because punk, the cultural entity, has been placed under the pressure of too many problems. At one point these made us forgot that what matters the most is that we should be very smart about which tools will we use for this fruitless process that has a orphan output: music. This means we have to know what we want (disco) and what we can do (whatever is free) and how will we connect these two to get the third which is to get it done. Damn, it's mathematics (one plus one) and no one understands numbers. History has proved that for punx, language might not be the best instrument to cope with confusion.

I'm talking about occasions when people said that rape has other meanings than sexual abuse. Probably it does, dictionary is our star witness in this case and someone might would use it as one of those different meanings, I could believe it because for example in Hungarian we use the following expression "I have to rape myself to… listen to Bad Religion" and it doesn't mean I have to use sexual abuse to force myself to gain the will to dip *Into the Unknown.* For another example we also commonly use néger as a word for black people from Africa. The general agreement is that since we never enslaved Africans neither in colonies nor here in the homeland, néger does not equal nigger in our dictionary since it does not bear any pejorative meaning. Still, I would not say néger to an African, African American, black, POC, white, European, Asian, Australian, American, racist, alien person neither in Hungary nor anywhere else. They don't have to know our sociolinguistic background and I don't want to hurt their feelings because I am slightly aware of their historical background, colonialism, slavery, segregation, present society, etc. I try to use language consciously so I have to be careful about who is sensitive to what expressions I use. I I have to learn to select my words properly. Properly enough to arrange it to my own claim that relates to how much I care about other people. In the day and age of information where everybody is talking all the time whatever shit they want to, to get your communication as clear as possible is very important for those who really want to say something. Meanwhile I make it as confusing as I can to say that I don't get anything and have nothing to say.

On the other hand I could say that those who would be hurt by this should learn my language and see the difference but I guess the exploitation of Africa and black people everywhere are a bit of a bigger deal than knowing the etymological background of sketchy Hungarian words. Just as being sexually abused might be a bigger deal than learning the hundredth obscure meaning of "rape." Language is used by people and dictated by these people (you, me those who buy milk in the grocery store, everybody), not by dictionaries. It's sad but true, so embrace your books because even if you didn't mean to say something fucked up, people could think the opposite by their own right through their own interpretation.

This sounds like a load of work? It does and that's why I said there could be a border where your indolent leisure starts. For another example, I have no idea what cis-hetero or cis-male (?) means (OK, I do, but I learnt it way later then it appeared on my horizon and got quickly over-used). I know I will never use it to describe myself, not because these words would not fit me, but I rather choose to stay silent. I stay silent because I'm Caucasian, white, hetero, Eastern-European, male (born like this), upper middle class (a bit worked for this). With these attributes most of the times I should be silent and let others speak. I'm boring. I should instead work on establishing an environment where people could have a chance to speak who are not as privileged as I am.

In my silent moments I'm constantly learning Hungarian language in order to be able to express myself in a better way (in Hungarian). It's a never-ending and very painstaking job but I do it. I like to do it. Two years ago I didn't know I didn't know the language, now I know I don't know it and hopefully someday I will know it. So now if I'm not able to say what I really want to say I don't open my mouth. I spend an awful amount of my time silent. So if I would be keen to raise my voice against state violence towards innocent people even if I failed with explaining my point then I wouldn't hit someone in the face who criticizes the way I have expressed myself. This is the question of language, not the question of strength. Thus in a situation like this I would feel hurt and angry and would use this anger to go back to my room and learn more and get my words or rather my sentences clearer. But if violence is the only requisite to defend my point in an argument then maybe I should just try something else rather than words. Because hitting people goes against words. A text won't leave a black eye on anyone's face. Musicians should make music primarily, not statements between songs.

The question has changed from what we care about to how much we care. How much time do we give for a topic in order to understand it, to think about it and make sentences out of these thoughts? The environment of these expressions has also gained another element. That is, who are we making angry with what we say? If I talk about how expensive the postage prices are I'm also stating that this problem of mine matters for me more than other people's poverty or anything else that is not less irrelevant. Which is most of the time, sadly true. But I know this, since this problem of mine is a privilege and that's why I have never complained about the crazy expensive postage prices. *Wozu Dichter in dürftigen Zeiten?*

The homework for a punk is to know what the frustration s/he is influenced by is and how much s/he wants to deal with it. How does s/he wants to deal with it? The homework for a band is to transform this into songs, let it be a well-thought thesis or flying fists. To write songs that shit themselves on the stage without any feces entering the atmosphere. If someone is able to do that then they are a great band. A great band should play either great music or music in a great way. Sentences could have music in themselves but this music happens when words are read out loud. Music in punk happens when people play their instruments. I would be nowhere without punk but I would be a lot less bright without books if I only relied on lyric sheets, basing my knowledge on unity songs. If I stop for a moment, take few steps back and look at all the punk music I was listening to, it's really hard to pinpoint something out that was an evident message that influenced me anyway. The attitude is something different, to be aware of all those issues but for me art and life in general is about coping with confusion thus I can appreciate the enthusiastic craziness of bands who use noise to tell us something about themselves. I listen to a lot of music that is verbal language I cannot understand. My theory is that these bands have stayed on the surface because even without understanding what their lyrics are about, their guitars do their job instead of those lyricists, inscribing important footnotes on universal confusion. What the hell did they want to say with those damned solos? With that crazy drumming on the Jerry's Kids LP? What's happening on the Declino / Negazione split, why it is that familiar? Just Like Absurd's *Blodig Stad*, Aburadako, Acousma, Cock Roach? What can't be said, must remain unsaid. But I want to talk a lot about these sounds, I would so much rather talk about them than about shitheads who beat up their own crowd.

SONIC STATEMENTS

While Budapest was demonstrating that contrary to the common belief among modestly educated people being gay is neither abnormal nor more normal but just as normal as being straight or anything else, I was lying in my bed battling with diarrhea and Werner Herzog's *Stroszek*. A drama of a person who can't defend himself against the world, although he sees and understand the flood of mean cruelty that has taken him through this deviant journey. Thanks to science I could defend myself with carbon pills, even though I did not understand what was going on in my stomach, so later that day I could go and see Lime Crush who were brain crushingly awesome. They turned my brain water into cold lemonade. From the land of kangaroos and Mozart, Lime Crush brought with them a magically free and vivid atmosphere and fenced it around with imaginary blanket walls setting a mood for a slumber party in casual wear where everything is fun and nothing is too silly if it's honest like a playful child's imagination. The constant rotation of instruments and roles showed us the core voice of the band, keeping it fun through serious and non-serious topics in a seriously pleasant way.

Their set was a great mix of well-thought tricks, off-beat rock'n'roll, kind of girl group-garage sound mixed with punk disharmony and Dadaist fun. Their music sounded solid, powerful and entrancing. It seemed as the special thing in them was that they wanted to have fun and since they counted themselves among those who they wanted to entertain, without a wall between their and our desire, what they did was what they wanted to do without any need for feedback or response. We were equally included in this fun and was asked to co-operate by smiling. This is why their music is so movingly influential to do anything, to actually have fun. Because it has in it the must component: to do.

Another example of great live performance during the last couple of days was Vexx's mind-blowing set. According to some, Vexx is the best live band in America now, and in short of having the chance to see too many of their competitors I only have a vague idea if this label is true or not, but after their set yesterday I can say it could be a well-deserved compliment. Hysteria, mania, chaos and precise guitar creaks with ruthlessly pounded drums mixed into a heightened version of true rock'n'roll. The one for what people sweat even in shiny clothes. Rock'n'roll that formed through dancing that meant more than fun and when music had danger. Vexx was not dangerous in any sense, they had no risk in their music, but their reduced charm was the same as those young fellows' who moved to Berlin and destroyed ballrooms with their twisted beats. These are different times and even the cops who came out to check on the show's volume were harmless. But it wasn't reenactment or a necromancy of the lost soul of rock and roll. What is great in Vexx is not even a thing that could be learned or placed into music, it's the greatness between notes and pace changings, what is not written into the music, but comes alive when that music is played, this is why it is so real.

It was an also interesting scene to see how Mary Jane could smuggle her performance into the music robbing the attention with how her moves incorporated into the sounds that surrounded them. Again I wondered on the Jesus effect of the scene in question as the crowd was watching somebody presenting her deepest frustrations, while we only smiled back at her. Mary Jane then grabbed and dragged some of the girls by their hands right into the front row. It was a unique moment when so much was said without words, a demonstration only with having fun. She said more with her body, using her moves as sentences better than most people do with minute-long rants between songs.

Totally
Lame
with Neve Be

Last month's guest column was inadvertently uncredited. Neve wrote it and this month marks the first regular installment of "Totally Lame." Welcome, Neve!

Thank you to Agatha's song, "Better", my new self-selected, sonically complex and highly encouraging alarm, for assisting my rise in the technically morning hours. Despite all references to my "inner-growth" and anything resembling "adult punkhood" potentially found later in this column, I still go to sleep at

3:00 a.m. no matter what time I get in bed and have trouble getting up before 11:30 or 12:00. Given my disability justice bent, and my belief in all kinds of marginalized cultures' right to an internal sense of time, "accurate" or not, I cannot really call getting up as a late as I do an access need. Moving slow in the morning when I am sore or uncaffeinated? Totally an access need. Going to bed at 3:00 a.m. because I am reading trauma healing narratives or having phone sex? Fine choices, but not so much access needs. But anyway, today I got to say, "Hellloooo 10:30 a.m.!" and I feel a like a regular high roller. Whatever that means. Trying a different format this month and we'll see if it sticks:

Accessibility shoutout: Found out recently that folks I know are taking over the BAD SMUT show line, which I find delightful! I reached out to Ari, *MRR* contributor and zine genius, who once 86ed me from the Red and Black in Portland for general oogledyness but I think now likes me just fine, who told me that they, Mikey of Healers, and Heather Blotto of Composite (such a sweet tangy fanged satisfying sound) are taking over the show line as of this month. I asked them if accessibility info would be a part of the voicemail menu and they said *yes yes yes*! She included a broad range of features in her head of what constitutes accessible and inaccessible, which is great—wheelchair access, scents, lights, etc. included. Here's to a new way of talking about punk shows in the East Bay and beyond! There might be some other indication in your world that the line is active but in the coming weeks try 510-BAD-SMUT.

Inaccessibility shoutout: On August 1st my friend Spark was visiting from New Orleans and I thought it'd be chill to go this show at Dead Rat Beach. It was a benefit for Red Light Legal, an organization that provides resources, support, education, and advocacy to/for/about sex workers and sex work and I am big fan. It was also the second show of Di's new band Beast (not necessarily named after me), which she claims is not hardcore enough for some and too screamo vox for others and which I am already prepared to love. I also really dig Composite and Folléto and have never seen them live. I've been to Dead Rat Beach before, in fact saw Agatha there and it was stressful but not overly mortifying, and thought I remembered the place correctly, but when I looked at the facebook event and saw no accessibility info posted, I asked them to post it. Di described it the way I remembered-six or so big steps in the front to get to the bathroom inside, showspace is in a little nook of a basement through the yard and to the right of the main steps, down another big step. I posted that I was down to come if folks were down to help out, and a lot of people actually responded, including Di, who I later found out had told folks watching Beast's set that she was going to ask folks to move if I showed up. Which is sweet. I like Di.

I showed up later than I wanted to (disabled/POC/queer/femme/punk time) and then was frozen with anxiety. I missed Beast's set. And I missed all the other sets too because I couldn't bring myself to move through the yard, saying, "Excuse me/excuse me/excuse-" to all the folks who couldn't see me rolling by. The virtual expression of access support balks in the face of a big party of a punk show, in which most people are very tall compared to me, and all of the ones I could see were friends of my friends of my friends. People who make me nervous to ask for things, even things as simple as, "Can I get by?" Who were those folks I communicated with online? Who said, "Hell yeah! We'll get you through!" Haven't I learned to not count on that by now?

But as Sean Gray and I expressed to each other so many months back, if you want the show bad enough, you never learn. Even with the folks I came with, I froze. I am a physically disabled person who experiences ableism, and I am also a person with PTSD and chronic anxiety who experiences ableism. These things intersect immensely, especially given that my anxiety is often triggered when faced with inaccessible situations and able-bodied seeming people (I can't know the vastness of someone's experience but a leg walky is a leg walky, see?). It would be pretty simple to ramp that little step. It would be pretty simple even to just say, "Maybe we should ramp that step." It would be pretty simple to put up signs saying, "Consider those around you! Listen to people if they need to get by or if they say you are blowing smoke in their face! Respect! Respect! Respect!" Too sentimental for you? Too precious? Well I don't give a fuck. At the very least, know the limitations of your space, and NAME THEM ON YOUR EVENT PAGE. "All of us or none," the title of said punk show, is an awesome sentiment, but it doesn't mean anything if you aren't acknowledging who you're leaving out of "all." Spaces aren't perfect, people make mistakes, forget stuff, I get it! But we can learn. Or I sure hope we can. And I'm hoping to change the culture of event descriptions at the very least. But my dream is to change the culture of how we gather in inaccessible or wantonly ableist ways. Thank you Di for how you tried. Let's keep trying.

Which brings me to the question I have for myself. Where is my responsibility in all of this? How is my identity as an adventure punk and drunk punk and show obsessed punk changing as I realize that alcohol has often been a blanket to shield me from ableism and social anxiety when faced with tons of white able-bodied people who don't know I exist, as I realize that not all adventures were born with me in mind and have continued to exclude my body, and as I realize that many shows produce said anxiety and ableism and also were not designed with disabled people in mind?

I don't know what DIY means if not that I must redesign, for myself, my concept of being punk, of being community oriented, and of being a fan of live music and total liberation for all oppressed people. People refer to the limitations of money and space, when excusing inaccessibility, but are we maybe speaking more about habit, laziness, and a lack of imagination? *I would like to note that the previous sentence could be interpreted in an ableist way and I don't want it to be read that way. I recognize that all people have access needs, and some access needs circumstantially conflict with other access needs. A space might have gone unrenovated or uninnovated due to inhabitants' varying disabilities such as chronic illness or developmental disability or psychic difference, which in part could work in opposition to the access needs of a wheelchair using person. Access is complex, and intersectional, and also diversectional, and we have to have these conversations for real because it is also achievable. "Readily" or not.

I think that my definition of fun is changing. How bizarre. I don't find human beings being loud and creative and cute any less fun than I used to, I certainly don't find wild art less fun, or dancing, or deep, fabric-of-your-life altering conversations, but I think that I am finding it less desirable to pretend I'm having fun when I'm not, or try to have fun because I believe I should find a not fun thing fun. It's especially hard to find an experience not fun if the other people around you are having a great time. This pertains pretty directly to both one-on-one not fun times (like nonconsensual sex enacted on me at punk shows or parties) and group not fun times (like scary-inaccessible punk shows where nonconsensual things have happened, icky not-sex only being one example). It's hard to not have fun at something when other people think it is fun and they also consider you to be someone who's fun. I know that introverts have a whole other set of challenges, but as an extrovert and a theatre kid who discovered punk rock at an early age, I have put a lot of pressure on myself to be the life of whatever is happening *despite* my disability and *despite* whatever ableist curveballs are thrown at me on the daily and especially in group gathering settings, and to *not let anybody get me down.* Unless *down* means *down for anything* in which case *I am always down.*

I guess I am questioning how down for anything I am. I enjoy the being "down" quality in other humans, like my adorable and badass friend Nico, currently visiting me from San Salvador, who makes me Latino punk mixtapes, has a band with her boyfriend Rubbert, who I would like to call Ruby (who is already in a band of concept goths I had never heard of but who are awesome and apparently much more famous than me and many things I have heard of—Safari Volvo) and who was once in a band called Twink 182. I can tell Nico, "Hey, dude, we're going to a show. I think it might be terrible but the venue is supposed to be accessible and we can go for free and the guitarist hit on me in a bizarre way." And she'll just be like, "Yes, duh, sounds cool. Love you duder. Maybe we should be high." Because that is how we do. Not necessarily the high part. But despite my admiration of sober people and straightedge hardcore kids like Torso and Lana Del Rey, and the long breaks I have taken from substance of all kinds (and like hard drugs get out) I am not gonna totally go that route. I enjoy medication and recreation when actually desirable or necessary.

Nico is one of those rare people whose

adventurousness can be counted on not just as whimsy but as adaptability. When shit hits the fan, or gets inaccessible or scary or fucked up, Nico is also ready to rumble. We have thrown a show in the woods together, moved longitudinally halfway down the country together, and danced our butts off together in less than conducive spaces. But I don't ever feel like I have to explain my experience or enjoyment or distress. We learn together. Same can be said for queer fam that I live with—my life partner and their romantic life partner, my sexy partner boo who lives in Seattle, and my other BFF Spark who lives in New Orleans. We have been through the trenches together and trust is some real shit. I'm always down to be down with those people, because with them, I don't have to *plead on behalf of my body*. They acknowledge complex experiences with their own bodies too. Perhaps, in situations in which I know the players and the stakes less well, I could be more cautious, or not even just cautious, but use my downness creatively. Like what if I used my downness to try or start something new and actually joyfully challenging instead of just sanity and safety testing like going to the same inaccessible and inconsiderate punk show spaces over and over again? I don't know how to be a correspondent on inaccessibility/accessibility and punk shows if I can't/don't want to try to get into half of the spaces I want to write about. Sometimes I think it's fun to get discriminated against (LOL) and sometimes I just don't. I'm going to have to start a collective of nondisabled ally spies.

When I first dreamed up "Lame is Punk" my thought was that I would consistently sacrifice my own safety and comfort in an effort to show up in spaces where leg walkys and non-disabled people do not expect or want to see a disabled/chair using person. But what it has taken me so long to get, is that what that does is tell those folks, "Inaccessibility is fine as long as you can find a way for Beast to get in." Fuck that. So I'm going to challenge myself to say "NO/And..." No/and is a concept I came up with a few years ago, which my professor and friend Jaclyn Pryor gave more credit than it deserved but still it is maybe useful. It means to say no complexly and with an accompanying answer that continues or redirects or reinvents the conversation. It is terrifying for me to say no. Especially if I want to say no and dream big at the same time. But my plan from here on out is to dream bigger than drinking myself ridiculous because I'm so uncomfortable with ableism and sexual harassment I am experiencing. My plan is to dream bigger than to seek assisted inclusion into spaces which have actively excluded me and my comrades and friends in disability justice. This intersects with other struggles differently marginalized punks. Let's stop saying, "Have mercy on me!" Let's take mercy on ourselves, mercy on each other, and create new ways to be with each other. I'll let you know what I come up with.

ENDNOTES:

1) I'm stoked for a few shows coming up this month in accessible spaces, which I will talk about next month. Tip! Even if your venue is accessible, that doesn't mean you shouldn't say so in your event description on the internet or on your flyer!

2) A few columns back I referenced seeing Wiscon at Kremwerk in Seattle and it was mistyped as Wison. I'm sorry! Wiscon is so fun! And Wison...? You're welcome!

3) Hey punk! If you would like to contribute an inaccessibility or accessibility shoutout to be potentially included in my column, Totally Lame! email me at foxlovesriver@gmail.com. These can be about venues or houses or social interactions or something you read even. If you have venue descriptions to add to itvaccessible.com, go to Sean's website!

4) Would you like to join a collective of access inspecting and creating radical spies who do not work for the government or enforce accessibility via litigation but via creative public encouraging/shaming efforts? Also get in touch.

MOM, LOOK, I'M IN A MAGAZINE!!
GUEST COLUMN
SEX
PISTOLS
A
B
C

My name is Tina. I live at the Shit Biscuit in Minneapolis. My ex-partner, a well-known and liked musician in the punk/DIY scene, physically assaulted me six months ago. This is disputable depending on whom you are talking to in my city. My life is a precarious game of trying to guess who believes me, who tolerates me, and who thinks I'm a "lying bitch." It is crazy to witness people who know someone's history of abusive behavior supporting him because it's too hard for them to change their perspective of who he is. He's like, such a nice guy, you know?

I won't go into the actual assault, or the constant emotional abuse that led up to it. That isn't the point of writing this. I know what happened. I know I was assaulted. I grew up in an abusive home. My father was a sad, confused young man who was so damaged by his personal trauma that he had no idea how to love children of his own. Abuse is a part of my history. It is ingrained in me. It allowed me to choose partners who were not concerned with loving me.

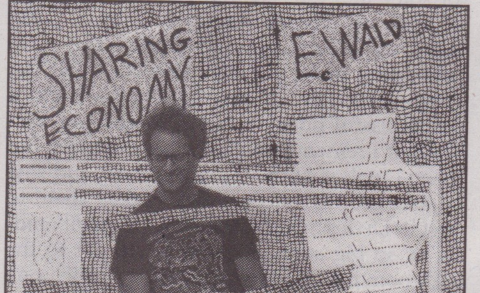
I'm writing this because of my frustration with how my community decided to handle it. I made a post on the internet only hours after being assaulted. I was at my family's house, wishing there was some way I could will my body to quit functioning so I could stop the waves of pain that were consuming me. I was utterly traumatized, and was looking for any kind of support I could find. And I fucking received support. I received it openly, and privately. People I hardly knew would approach me and ask if they could hug me, or tell me that I'm strong for speaking up. I am so grateful for the support I did receive. It kept me alive.

And then there was everyone else. I was told that I'm mentally ill. That because I have been sexually assaulted and dared to talk about it, my story is a little hard to swallow—"She does this kind of thing." Instead of worrying about how I would heal, I opened myself up to more abuse from men who didn't even pretend to care about me. There were people who wanted to stay "neutral," as if that's even a stance you can have in situations like these. *Situations like these. These situations happen over and over and more often than not victims are made to feel like they have something to prove. Situations like these that keep happening because of your refusal to accept that this friend in that band isn't who he seems to be.*

Or you sweep it under the rug because you're too scared to deal with it. So you book his band again, even though he purposely bikes past my house every day. Even though the woman he dated after me contacted me because of the fucked up things he did to her. And the seven other women he dated before me who told me their own experiences of physical and emotional abuse. Or you "like" his comment calling Jeff from Enabler disgusting. Even though he's openly harassing my friends in the same thread, other women who don't deserve it. We're women, and you're one of the cool guys. Don't worry about it. We've figured out how to keep each other as safe as we can, and we'll do it again. Are you afraid that I'm talking about you? You should be.

I know that I'm probably martyring myself by writing about this so publicly. I don't care. It's more important for me to keep women safe than to be able to go to a fucking punk show. I can listen to records in my bedroom anytime.

To my abuser, the man who thinks he is a victim of every woman in his life, I want you to know my life is good. I know you think you broke me, but you didn't. I surround myself with people I love, something I wasn't allowed to do when I was with you. I wake up in the morning, and I remember that I am alive. I remember that I can do anything I want because I am my own person. And every night I go to sleep I think to myself, "The best revenge is living well."



ABSTRACT

What the fuck is good you human hot dogs; welcome back to my intercontinental embarrassment of a column.

Last month I think I expressed the mission statement of *Sharing Economy* as a column for and about the "Bay Area DIY punk experience." This month I'll be reviewing each gas station and food co-op I visited on I-5 over the last three weeks. I guess I spent a lot of time travelling this month. Plus, let's be real, DIY punk in the Bay Area only gives you so much material, most of which is too distressing and area-specific to be of any interest for you.

It's not too wild of a deviation, I hope. *The road* is something we can all relate to. If you're not just picking up this magazine to wipe your ass with it in the bathroom of Extreme Noise or Thrillhouse (as the distro coordinator I can officially state that this is where 20% of our circulation ends up), you may spend some of your time thinking about your ethics and how that intersects with your punk life. The true test of where you stand is out in the wild, "after the gig," "out of the city" and so on. Cut off from the comforts of home and abandoned to the vast wilderness of the roadway, you are forced to abandon all illusions of self-sufficiency and auto-determination.

Unless you're stowing away in a boxcar or the landing gear of an airliner, getting from one place to another is a series of transactions. You are forced to engage with the perpetually churning machinery of capitalism on the road, to keep your stomach and gas tank full and your eyes open. At home you often have options for "ethical consumerism," especially in urban areas such as the one where this mag is published. These options are fewer and further between on the interstate, and traveling itself can be exhausting enough where people might just give up their set of values.

METHODOLOGY

What follows is an experiment. My hypothesis is that punks on the interstate fall into two camps. The first are the "*conscious consumers*," those who will seek out healthy places to refuel and eat with minimal environmental or constitutional impact. That's "not my thing," but that's fine, that's great. The second—my kind of people—are the "*ignorant eaters*," who have no qualms with eating McDonald's or Taco Bell, who revel in the excesses of car culture as we crest on the global emissions threshold. There's no value judgment here. Punk is a wide net that can catch those who want to envision and enact a better world, as well as those that want to jump into the flames of the one that's already lit.

Initials have not been altered. No one is innocent. The most vocal members of the traveling party, *MRR* coordinator GA and contributor GH, were definitely more "conscious" in their approach on the first leg. So that we'd have a more scientific method going on here, I took command of the stops on the next trip. The control group consisted of GA and myself, picking up a Nevadan subject (CD) on the way back. Here is the raw data:

CONTROL GROUP: SAN FRANCISCO TO LOS ANGELES

8/15/15, 5:30 p.m. — Valero in Kettleman City, CA Exit 309

The only piece of useful information in this month's entire column is this: the cheapest gas at this exit—where everyone stops strictly for the In-N-Out—is at the Valero to the left, all the way at the end of the road from the I-5. Everything else is 50 cents more per gallon, at least. It was about 110°F. We bought a KitKat at the gas station, which melted by the time we got to the car. There was no time to throw it in the freezer, so we ate like animals, not even breaking the pieces off.

8/17/15, 8:02 a.m. — Arco-AM/PM in Highland Park, Exit 15 (CA-2)

I drank a bunch of whisky and Tecate and slept for four hours before waking up and coming here. Ate an egg and sausage muffin from under the heat lamp. My only regret is not eating it before I went to the register.

8/17/15, 11:45 a.m. — Arco-AM/PM in Buttonwillow, CA Exit 257

GA picked up an incredible pupusa from a truck across the road. She was way more hungover than anybody else in the car, and it seemed to restore her humanity for at least 45 minutes. Will make a point of stopping here again. CD made the same KitKat mistake that GA and I made at Exit 309, but with a pack of "minis." These eventually congealed into an uncanny blob of wafer and chocolate that I presume is something like the candy they eat along the *ausfahrts* of the famous autobahn.

8/17/15, 1:03 p.m. — Subway in Coalinga, CA, Exit 334

It is common knowledge that Subway pumps a fake "fresh baked bread" smell into each of their restaurant locations, but did you know that they also pump it into the bathrooms at this Central Valley franchise? Strictly a bathroom stop. Unless you are getting a steak across the road from Harris Ranch (really, you're on I-5 already, who has the time?) keep driving.

8/17/15, 2:30 p.m. — Love's in Gustine, CA, Exit 407

CD and I discovered that this gas station has an incredible collection of canes, straight-to-video DVDs, hats, anything you can desire that has a skull on it. If you're doing it for the 'gram, you're doing it here. GA refused to leave the car. Very cheap gas.

TEST GROUP: SAN FRANCISCO TO OLYMPIA

8/7/15, 11:05 a.m. — Pilot Travel Center in Arbuckle, CA, Exit 556

You may say this station offers a *taste of the Central Valley*, mostly dried produce that seem kind of out of place with the rest of the standard gas station offerings. I might have held off until I got burned out on Pirate's Booty or Doritos, but GH went straight for the dried okra. He opened it up in the van. It smelled horrid. We had to roll the windows down. My check engine light came on after we filled up here. I chose to ignore everything.

8/7/15, 3:03pm — Ashland Food Co-op in Ashland, OR, Exit 11

Got pretty stressed out here. I don't like Oregon, I don't like Ashland, I don't like being this far from the freeway. I walked in through the wrong entrance and started piling hot food on my plate before I brought it up to the register and realized they charged by weight and that I'd put thirteen dollars worth of food in front of me. The cashier there graciously let me scrape some off. I do hope the staff ate the half I left behind. Also, I think I saw a young family leaving the parking lot with a shopping cart that had an ostrich egg in it.

8/7/15, 6:23pm — SeQuential Biofuels in Eugene, OR, Exit 189 (Visit #1)

The fabled "hippie gas station" of Eugene, OR lives up to the hype. Things you may have heard of already: the living roof; that they have kombucha on tap; that every kind of gas they have here is some kind of freaky ethanol blend. I filled up with 85% and they gave me a free cup of coffee! More gas stations should take efforts to keep their motorists awake, especially here, in the part of Oregon where it's easy to nod off. I almost took a turn into the curb of the sidewalk instead of their driveway, good looking out.

8/9/15, 10:45am — Olympia Food Co-op, East Side in Olympia, WA, Exit 107 (Visit #1)

This place stressed me out. I drove here for a cup of coffee after waking up in the woods. Everyone told me to avoid the West Side co-op. What side was I on? I picked up a croissant too, but didn't realize that I had to write down the number for it, felt pretty flustered and out of place by the time I left.

8/9/15, 1:30pm — Olympia Food Co-op, East Side, Olympia, WA, Exit 107 (Visit #2)

My host sent me here for some *mate* (tea leaves popular in the Rio Plata region of Argentina and Uruguay as well as the Olympic Peninsula), so I went back for another visit. This time I wrote the number down, but my handwriting was too shitty for anyone at the register to read it. I almost went back a third time but decided that would be too weird and embarrassing for everybody involved.

8/10/15, 12:59pm — SeQuential Biofuels, Eugene, OR, Exit 189 (Visit #2)

Another thing you may have heard about SeQuential: the toilets here have stirrups, so as to replicate a more natural squatting position and ease BMs for the weary traveler. This is only partially true. It's more like a wooden step around the edge of the bowl, and it's only in one of the two unisex bathrooms here. I used the bathroom three times on this stop, but managed to not pass anything into the one I was shooting for. Between bathroom breaks two and three I had what is probably the only good turkey club wrap I'll ever eat at a gas station.

8/10/15, 6:02pm — Berryvale Grocery, Mount Shasta, CA, Exit 740

The deli here is *bullshit*. The only foods they have in the deli are rice & beans and tortilla soup. They ran out of both while we were there. When one of us went up and asked for a cup of coffee, they asked if he wanted it for here or to go. When he said "to go," they told him it was after 5:00 p.m. and they weren't serving coffee any longer. The smell of wildfires burning across northern California was preeminent. The tamales at the stand across the street are just okay.

8/10/15, 6:59pm — Manfredi's Food & Gas Depot, Dunsmuir, CA, Exit 729

This was a weird one. We'd pulled up to a station a few exits earlier, near Dunsmuir, which was selling gas for more than $4/gallon—*no thanks!* Based on the name and lack of signage, I figured Manfredi's was the best option in this creepy neck of the woods.

It wasn't much cheaper, but our options were limited. At this point GH was cranky, so I took over driving after grabbing some fucked up Hostess Donettes and a can of gross Monster coffee drink. Some white teens did a donut in a Hyundai and the woman working there told us to stop standing on the table outside. GH: "I hate America".

CONCLUSIONS

I suppose my bias as an "ignorant eater" might make me unused to some of the transactions that can get you what you need outside from under the heat lamp. But am I truly unchanging in my ways? I think not—I've seen the light. Sure, between LA and San Francisco, do what you gotta do in Santa Nella and Buttonwillow. If you ever book a tour in through the Pacific Northwest, skip Portland, book a show in Eugene, quit your punk band, let your hair become a matted plait and get a job at SeQuential. Your new life awaits.

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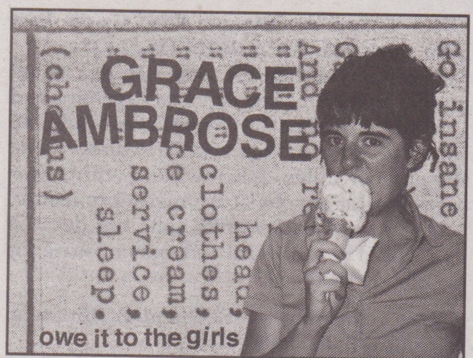

People from back east often ask me if I make a lot of trips to Southern California or the Pacific Northwest, always seeming to forget that those places are *very far away* from the Bay Area. The proximity to other cities is one of the things I miss the most about life in Philadelphia—two to three hours and $15 later you can be in New York or D.C. or Baltimore, with Boston, Richmond, Providence and Western Mass just a little further afield. It's a longer haul between destinations here—ten trafficless hours to Portland, six to L.A., and that's if you *don't* get distracted by stops at hippie gas stations and roadside pupusa stands.

We've just come out of the yearly August surge of touring bands—it seemed like there were worthwhile shows every night for a few weeks, thanks in large part to the run-off from two fests on opposite ends of the coast: Olympia Hardcore Fest (OHC) and Berserktown. Turns out the magazine doesn't fall apart if you leave it alone for a weekend so I got the fuck outta town to see some gigs. Business trips, yeah?

First stop: Olympia, my inaugural visit to the Pacific Northwest. We rolled up in Eli's Honda Odyssey, crashed in Portland overnight and got into Oly just in time for the first show of the fest. The main shows were at a spot called Obsidian—coffee shop/bar vibe in the front, show space in the back. (Shout out to the guy posted up on his laptop doing work all weekend!) All ages before 10:00 p.m., ins and outs all day, cheap tall cans, a decent PA—every city needs a space like this!

My favorite set of the day came from G.L.O.S.S., playing on their home turf to a crew of freaks and queers up front who knew every word. And the highlight of that? Just before the last song (the monstrous "Outcast Stomp") Sadie said, "If you've been holding back cause you feel like you're not supposed to be taking up space here…well, boys, you can mosh to this one too, 'cause this one's sick." It went off, I contemplated coming out of stage dive retirement, and for a moment hardcore seemed like it still had the potential to be a joyful and angry and incendiary force, even in the presence of mosh parts. You all know that I think ~unity~ is for fencewalkers and asskissers, but the equal-opportunity pit was... beautiful? Moving? "Sick"? If you live in the contiguous United States (and some parts of Canada), G.L.O.S.S. is probably coming to your town soon. I hope you're ready! (You're not!)

After shows have ruled every fest I've attended in recent memory (Lumpy and the Dumpers' slimy sex pit at New York's Alright 2014, Good Throb covering "Tube Disasters" at Damaged City 2014, Jason Halal almost decapitating me with a cymbal during the Neo Cons set at Damaged City 2013). Lots of people a little bit faded, crammed into a space that is inevitably a little too small and a lot less sterile than the rooms for the day shows. Old School Pizzeria serves passable west coast pizza by day and transforms pretty quickly into a great venue at night. (We also need a space like *this* in San Francisco! We need a venue that's anything but a bar! Can you think of a weird bowling alley, storefront church, or fairly big restaurant that might let a group of rowdy but respectful punks do a gig? Get in touch!)

Hundred of people pushed their way in, dangling from the rafters, dropping in from the top of the soda machine, standing on the counters and tables, precariously leaning on the gigantic fish tank, getting pushed right back out the front door with every swell of the crowd. Glue ended the first night with a cover of "In My Eyes" (accompanied by a riotous sing-along from every punk in attendance) which prompted me to consider the fact that hardcore bands just don't write *songs* any more. The next week, DX theorized that this might be because hardcore in the '80s was a populist movement, where as hardcore now is more inward-looking, nihilistic, anti-social. He might be onto something. What will be the songs young punks know all the words to thirty years from now? Probably still "In My Eyes" but maybe also "Outcast Stomp." A girl can dream. Late night visit to the K Records building to drool over Calvin's flyer collection, ogle the master tapes from my teenage indie pop dream records, and shoot the shit for a few hours in Dub Narcotic before retiring. Peak Olympia.

The next day was a lazy one, mostly spent alternating between the front and back porches of the wooded Perennial HQ, listening to CC Dust masters (dark pop project from Mary Jane who sings in Vexx—12" coming this fall on Perennial!) and CCTV practice. CCTV played later that night with Vexx and Big Zit, again at the pizza place. Not just gig of the fest, but gig of the year! One of the best shows I've ever seen! And on a Sunday night, no less. I ended up seeing Vexx three more times last month, on both sides of the Bay and in Santa Ana but, like with G.L.O.S.S., seeing them play at home was transcendental. They were untouchable. Just back from an extensive European tour, which saw them get off the plane and head straight to the studio (literally, straight to the studio from the airport), I think they played together something like forty of the past forty-five days. The twinges of stage-dive desire I had the day before became stage-dive reality—if you're going to come out of retirement, it might as well be off the counter of a pizza place while the best live band in America plays, right? And in a city with great pit style (the Bay Area is severely lacking in that department!).

CCTV was everything I hoped for, totally wild, songs that are burned into your brain upon first listen. Instant classics. Jenn is an incredible frontwoman. It reminded me a bit of when I saw Vial last fall, particularly their sick "Chunks" cover—that HC swagger inside of angular p-u-n-k sounds. West Coast tour already! I hear guitar genius Candice (of Necro Hippies/Mystic Inane) has joined the group on bass—more Candice appreciation below.

The fest was an overwhelmingly positive experience—shows were the perfect size and price, everything was within three or so blocks, beer was cheap, coffee was close, there were lots of outlets for everyone to charge their iPhones ("My phone's almost dead," the modern condition!). 100% will return next year and suggest that you make the trip yourself.

When I set out to write this (at the last possible second, natch! It's 10:19 a.m. right now and I gotta be out the door in half an hour!) I intended to praise OHC and talk a little bit of shit on Berserktown. Looks like I was too psyched on the good stuff to leave room for the mostly self-evident shit talking! I made a last minute decision to go down to Santa Ana for that fest—I have never seen Fred and Toody play and this seemed like my best shot, plus lots of friends were in from out of town. I only went for one day and I had a great time, but it had very little to do with the festival itself. I guess I'm grateful that some guy threw a party for me and all of my friends but if I had paid $55 a day to get into a club with no ins and outs and $11 Modelo tall cans, I woulda been bummed. Really bummed. DIY freaks > music industry people, punks > norms, everywhere > Orange County, Vexx in the pizza place > Vexx on the stage of a mostly empty amphitheater. But you're a punk, you don't need *me* to tell *you* any of that.

ENDNOTES:

1) Other quality sets in Olympia from from Cadenaxo, Rik and the Pigs, Slouch, Gag, Mysterious Skin, Vacant Life, Condition, Nudes, and many more…

2) Pick up the Vexx live cassette from Perennial for a taste of the fervor.

3) Candice from Mystic Inane is the coolest guitarist in the game. Psyched to have gotten to see those New Orleans freaks twice here in the Bay (and honored to have played with them!). Jonah has such a sick frontperson style, inspiring me to learn how to embrace the mic stand as a tool of dominance and destruction. Candice and Nathan are in another group called Patsy—they have two 7"s coming out soon on Total Punk. Send away for them the second you can! Demo up at itspatsy.bandcamp.com. You can hear a new track on the episode of *MRR* Radio they recorded during their visit!

4) Other great live groups I saw this month: Total Control, Watery Love, Vacation, Priests, Screaming Females, Royal Trux, Syndicate.

5) What does your CCTV 7" say? "Community College Teenage Validictorian [sic]" is my favorite so far.

#INVEIGH

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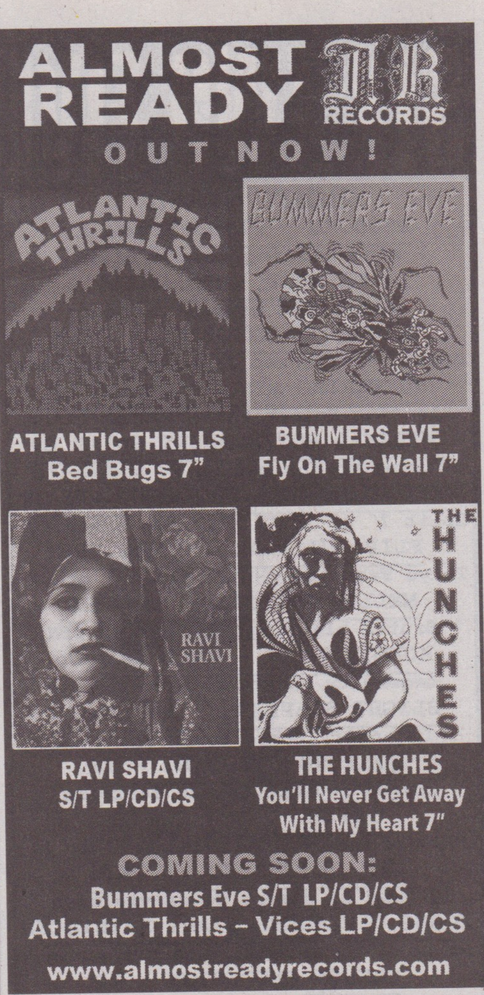

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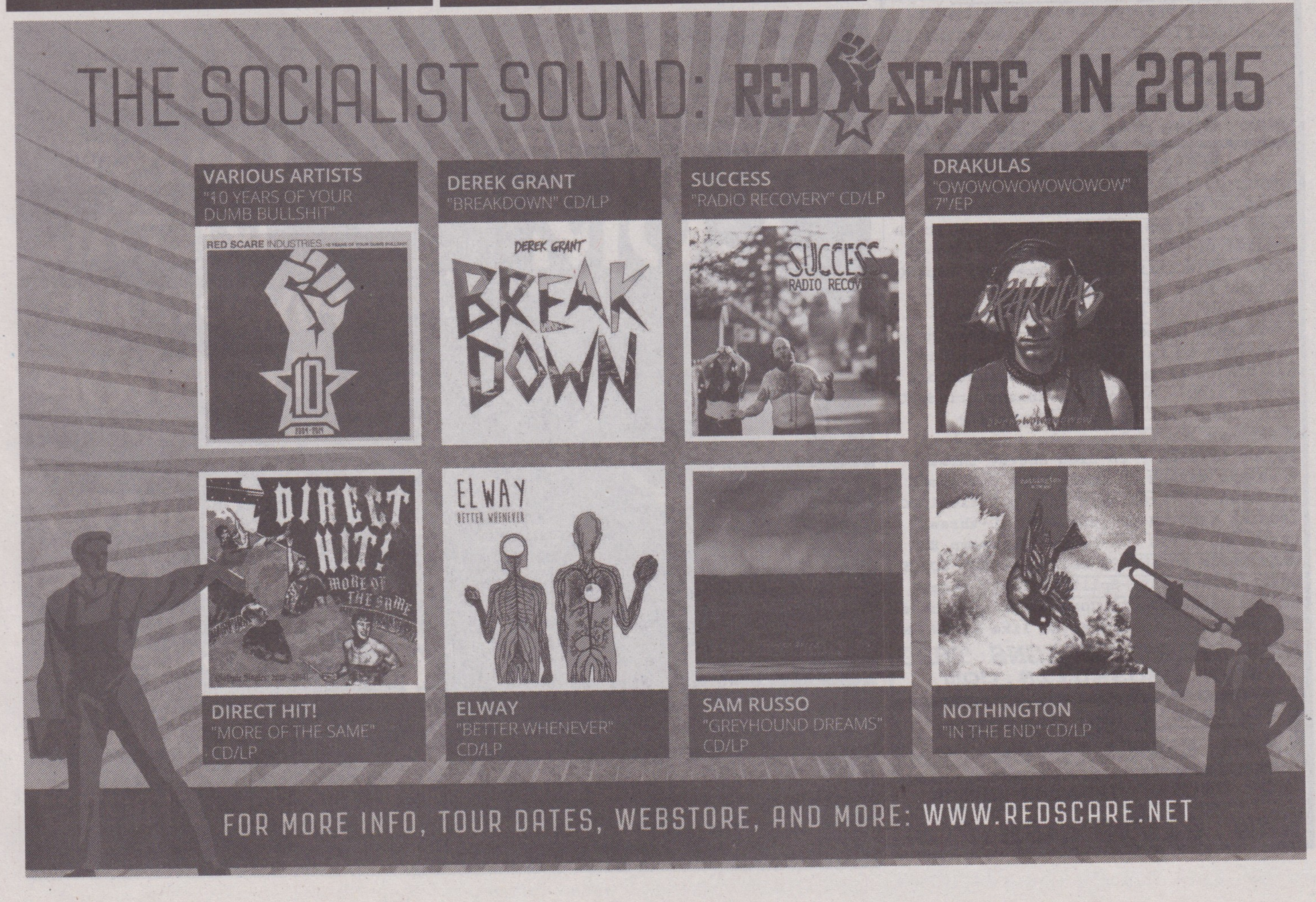

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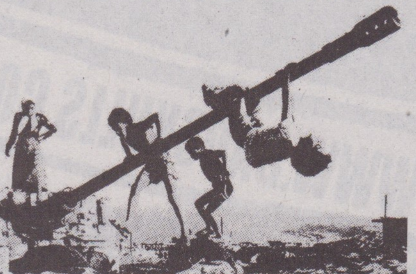

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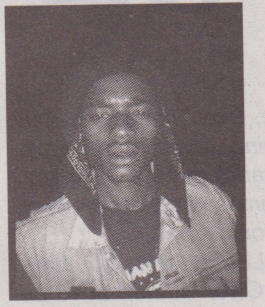
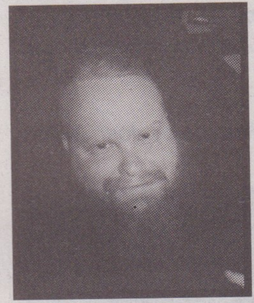
MRR asks you!

WHAT'S THE SCOOP?

This month's question: do you feel isolated from the rest of the world being a punk in South Africa? Asked at Punk Friday Skate Expo, in downtown Johannesburg, South Africa, by Tessa Tribe.

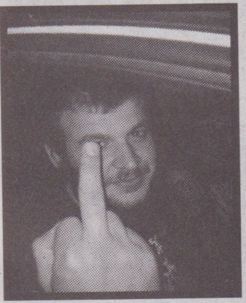


Thula, Soweto
singer of T.C.I.Y.F.
"I have other things besides punk. It's music so it's nice, but I fit in well with the world."

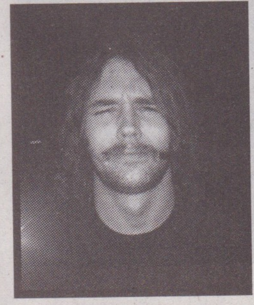


Lyle, Johannesburg
plays in Goat Throne
"We're all different in our own way, but we have more of a community outside of the mainstream here, so I don't feel too different. We all feel the same sort of way as a collective unit of musicians in Joburg."

Allas, Randfontein
"Definitely, well... slightly in a way. I've found a group of friends, so that means I don't think about the outside world anymore. No one gives a fuck who you are, you're one of us and we love you."

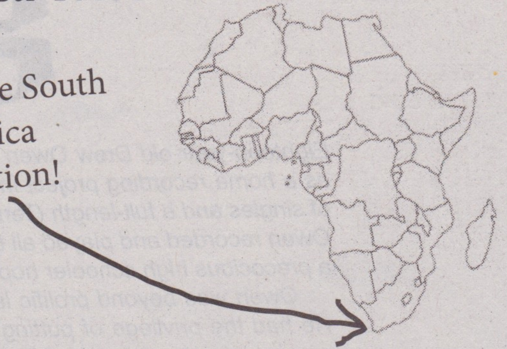


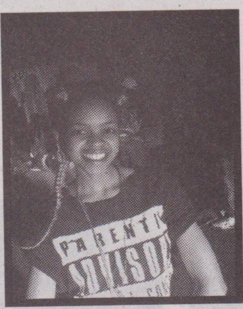
Johan, Johannesburg
"I do because musically I listen to powerviolence and grindcore, which is something that isn't thought of here. I've met a lot of nice people here I can associate with, but [...] at the end of the day like-minded people are all I really care about."



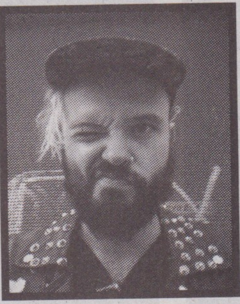
Mike, Johannesburg
singer of Brafcharge
"Musically no, because of the internet. I have friends on facebook from bands from all over the world, so it feels like there's a community. But socially yes, because we live in Africa and you can't get away from social norms here."

...the South Africa edition!

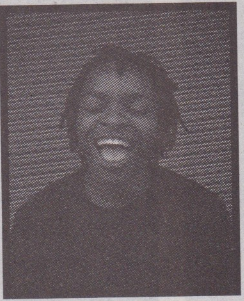




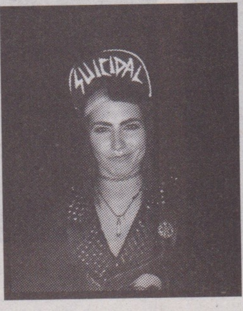
Millicent, Soweto
show organizer
"No, I don't. I don't feel isolated, I feel I am a part of something good."



Dean, Johannesburg
guitarist of Brafcharge
"Of course I feel isolated. Anyone who's into counter culture feels isolated here. [...] I think punk ideology is what separates us here, but I wish it wasn't that way."



Sandile, Soweto
bassist of T.C.I.Y.F.
"I don't feel isolated or feel that punk is any different here in South Africa, it's very DIY. We have that punk spirit here, even though the scene is quite small compared to the rest of the world; but I think that makes it more than punk because it's raw."



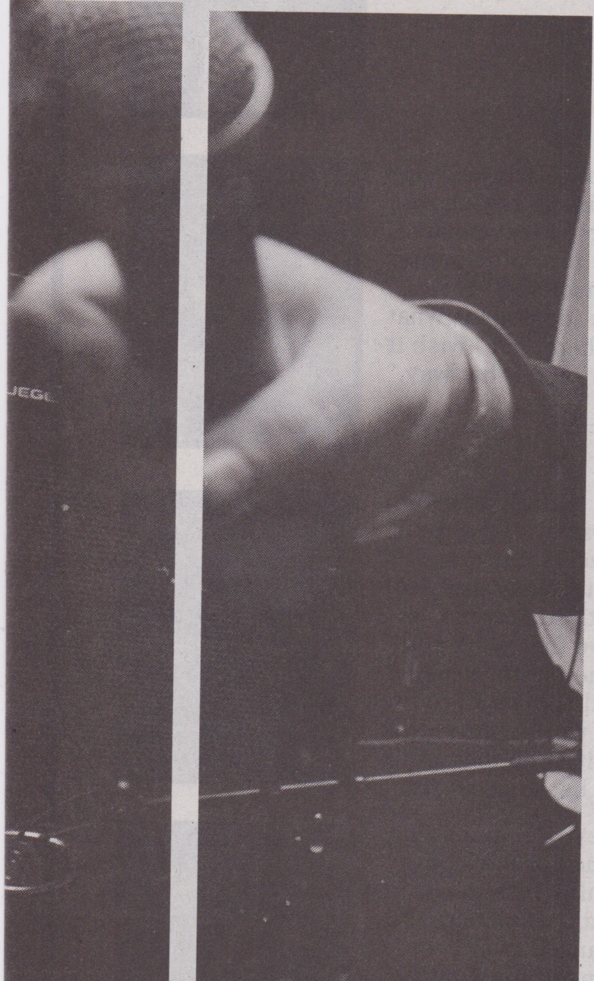
Kelsey, Johannesburg
drumer of Brafcharge
"I don't think I stand out in South Africa, I think here is a lot more advanced than people think. In terms of punk music, definitely. [...] Most people don't have access to internet, so the only way we can do it is to keep playing shows and expose people to it."

SICK

Eighteen-year-old Drew Owen is the man behind Sick Thoughts. Hailing from Baltimore, Sick Thoughts began as a home recording project in 2013. Never one for subtlety, Owen hit the ground running, releasing a couple of singles and a full-length (Terminal Teenage) by the year's end. Influenced by the Reatards and the Oblivians, Owen recorded and played all the instruments on his releases. His lyrics covered the themes you'd expect from a precocious high schooler hopped-up on punk rock: disaffection, boredom, and frustration.

Owen was beyond prolific last year, releasing no fewer than eleven singles and an LP (My Mess My Life). He had the privilege of putting a single out on Goner and playing 2014's Goner Fest. Owen started 2015 off on a good note, debuting DD Owen with a single on Windian Records. He also recently graduated high school, allowing him to tour extensively for the first time (that'll be kicked off by a late September/early October tour of Scandinavia with the Achtungs). A Sick Thoughts single on No Front Teeth and a small American tour should round out the year.

Introduction and interview by Ryan Leach. Photos by Josh Miller.



THOUGHTS

MRR: You're originally from Hanover, Pennsylvania?
Yeah.

MRR: You moved to Baltimore when you were still pretty young, right?
Yeah. I lived in Hanover for the first seven or eight years of my life. We then moved to Baltimore County. I've lived in Carroll County, as well.

MRR: You were a precocious kid. Your musical tastes—Oblivians, Reatards, Carbonas—were pretty advanced considering you were only sixteen.
Well, I had the internet.

MRR: You didn't have an older brother?
No. It was all stuff I stumbled upon. I've heard people say that kids like me don't work to find shit—y'know, because I have the internet. But there are a lot of people my age who don't know shit about music. It does take some time and effort to look this stuff up and get into it. But then again, it's not that much work.

MRR: You still have to be driven to discover underground music. You're right: the internet has cut down on some of the heavy lifting, but that doesn't mean it's all right there for you. Did you start playing guitar and then get into punk or was it vice versa?
I started playing guitar when I was nine. My parents took me to lessons. This guy taught me all these religious songs. I was like, "Man, this really sucks." So I stopped playing guitar. After that I started listening to stupid punk records. I thought, "Man, these people are idiots. I can probably do this." *[laughs]* So then I started doing it.

MRR: Was there any sort of small group of kids at your high school into punk rock? Or where you operating in your own little vacuum?
Nobody I knew in high school listened to this shit. Two of the three friends that I had—I tried to show them shit—and they'd just sort of say, "That's cool." That was about the extent of it. I tried to get them into punk, but I gave up. Top 40 radio and rap were big at my school. I was pretty much the only white kid there. People thought I worshipped the devil. They'd hear me listening to the Ramones on my headphones and would seriously ask, "What's that devil music you're listening to?"

MRR: You've worked with a lot of older people—I know Rob Fales at Southpaw Records and Eric Brady at Windian have played with you. They're at least ten years older than you.
Yeah. It's kind of weird. I've just hung out with older people. Rob and Eric were both super nice and helped me out.

MRR: In the liner notes to *My Mess My Life* (2014), you mention being hospitalized after a suicide attempt. Did Sick Thoughts help you work your way out of a depression spell?
I guess so. I did all of those first demo tapes a week after I got out of the psych ward. I remember being in therapy one day, and they asked, "Drew, what do you do in your free time? What is your coping mechanism?" I said, "Uh, I make music." I really didn't know what to say. I was lying. When I got back home from the hospital, I figured I might as well live up to that bullshit lie I told. I started making shitty music in my basement. I was also really bored.

MRR: Sick Thoughts hit hard. It seemed like you had a new single out every month last year. And with good labels: Goodbye Boozy, Zaxxon, and Goner, to name a few.
Yeah. Gabriele [Di Gregorio] wrote me: "Let's do a record." It was crazy. I was fifteen and losing my mind, and then I get an e-mail from a guy in Italy wanting to do a record with me. The rest of the shit just happened naturally. People e-mailing me, I'd e-mail them. We'd trade records, and then they'd want to do a 45.

MRR: You really took advantage of music hosting sites.
Bandcamp did help out a lot. I don't really have anything bad to say about the site. But I don't like using it anymore. I'd prefer it if people bought records. I'd rather sell a record for five dollars than get five dollars through digital sales.

MRR: You're sort of a throwback. Nowadays, licensing deals appear more important than ever for some. But I always appreciated people like Billy Childish, Roy Vucino, and Dan Melchior. Their emphasis always seemed to be on getting work out.
I don't know anything about the business side of music. ASCAP and BMI? Whatever. Nobody is going to put a Sick Thoughts song in a commercial, so I don't really see the point in trying. I put a little 'c' with a circle on my record. I don't know what that does.

MRR: Like Jay Reatard, you sort of learned as you went along—both how to play and record.
We also played all of the instruments [on our records]. I went on Craigslist and bought a drum kit for $25. That's what I learned how to play on.

MRR: *My Mess My Life*...
That shitty record.

MRR: You don't like it? How about *Terminal Teenage*?
I don't like any of them. I think both of those LPs suck. I want to buy the remaining stock of both of those records and throw them off a fucking bridge. I want to throw them into the Chesapeake Bay.

MRR: You're not so fond of your back catalog. Why the disgust?
They're fine records. I just don't like them. Deadbeat Records hit me up and said, "Let's do a record." I said, "Yeah, blah, blah, blah." I was stupid and young. I didn't know what I know now. If I could do it all over again, I'd stagger my releases. I just had a huge overflow. I was constantly writing, constantly releasing records. I didn't know when to stop and pause. I blame it on my immaturity and naiveté. I do hate both of the covers of those records.

MRR: The first one had a great cover. It was sort of a homage to the Oblivians. You were thin then, too. How old were you? Sixteen?
I'm fucking fat now. I'm going to be living on my own soon, so I'll be thin again. I'm not going to eat as much to save money, so I'll be that cool, 150 pounds again. You mentioned the Oblivians. People don't get that—sure, I love the Reatards, but I also love the Oblivians and a million fucking other bands from that scene. People are so quick to say, "Oh, you're a copycat of Jay Reatard. You're not original at all." But that's the same thing Jay did. He loved the Oblivians and said, "Shit, I want to do something just like that." And he did it. I guess because I'm the third in line, people feel the need to talk shit.

MRR: At the same time, you've got to

have thick skin. People claiming you're a Jay Lindsey clone are making a real oversimplification. But then again, Jay was great and he's an influence in what you do.
Anybody who says I'm a Jay Reatard clone can fuck off. Goner Records released one of my 7"s. They wouldn't give a fuck if they thought I was a rip-off artist.

MRR: You're aiming to stagger your releases more?
I want to release everything I record. I always make sure it's good and that people will like it. I just want to slow it down. I feel like when you slow down, people are waiting for your next release more. Touring is going to help, especially with selling records. I've never been on tour. The furthest out I've been is Memphis.

MRR: You've never been on the West Coast or gone further south than Tennessee, huh?
Yeah. So far I've played Baltimore, New York City, Memphis, Orlando, and Richmond. So not a lot of people know about Sick Thoughts. The internet bump helped. But people want to see that shit live.

MRR: You were getting the internet bump for a while, on sites you're likely not a fan of.
Oh, yeah. That was all thanks to my Hollywood PR team. I was making a million bucks a month. The internet buzz wore off quick. Beneath one of those articles some kid commented, "His dad must have a huge PR budget set aside for him. He sucks." My PR team is my Gmail account, piece of shit.

MRR: For a while there you had about four bands going: Timecop, Caught...
Those were just home-recording projects.

MRR: Sure, but you were putting time into them. On past e-mails, you told me you were thinking of ending Sick Thoughts. Everything seemed really manic.
I was kind of schizophrenic with all of those bands.

MRR: The workload helped keep you busy and sane?
I would think so.

MRR: I really liked the DD Owen single. Are you going to be pursuing DD Owen in the future? I think that's the only other project you've released a record with outside of Sick Thoughts.
I did release the Chicken Chain LP. That one is good. That DD Owen single is really fucking good. I listened to it again recently and I'm really proud of it. I'm actually having the first DD Owen practice this Saturday. Then we're doing a show in two weeks. I think we're going to take it in a more rock direction.

MRR: How has your recording gear and recording knowledge evolved? Obviously, everything you cut is really hot.
When I bought that drum set, I also bought a four-track because I knew I was going to want to record shit. I started recording a ton of music. I worked off that four-track for a while. Every 7" I released up until DD Owen, I recorded on that four-track. Every Sick Thoughts LP was done on that Tascam. Actually, that's not true: *Beat on Beat* was recorded on a broken eight-track recorder. It only had three tracks. It sucked to record on. Right now, I'm just using my computer. Everything sounds so good. People like analog technology. But the simple fact is: if you suck, you suck. It doesn't matter what you record on. It's so much easier to work on my computer. I can add a million overdubs. If I want it to sound warmer, I can just dump songs onto my four-track and then rip it from a tape. I've just picked up on recording techniques along the way and found out what worked best. I'm going to record a couple of bands soon and get paid for it.

MRR: What's on the horizon for Sick Thoughts?
I just got this new band together. The lineup I have now—they're like my stable lineup for Baltimore. If we ever do a weekender, they can do it. Whenever I go on an out-of-state tour, I want to tour with another band and just have them back me. It just makes sense to do that. Some people might not like that the same four people aren't constantly playing in Sick Thoughts.

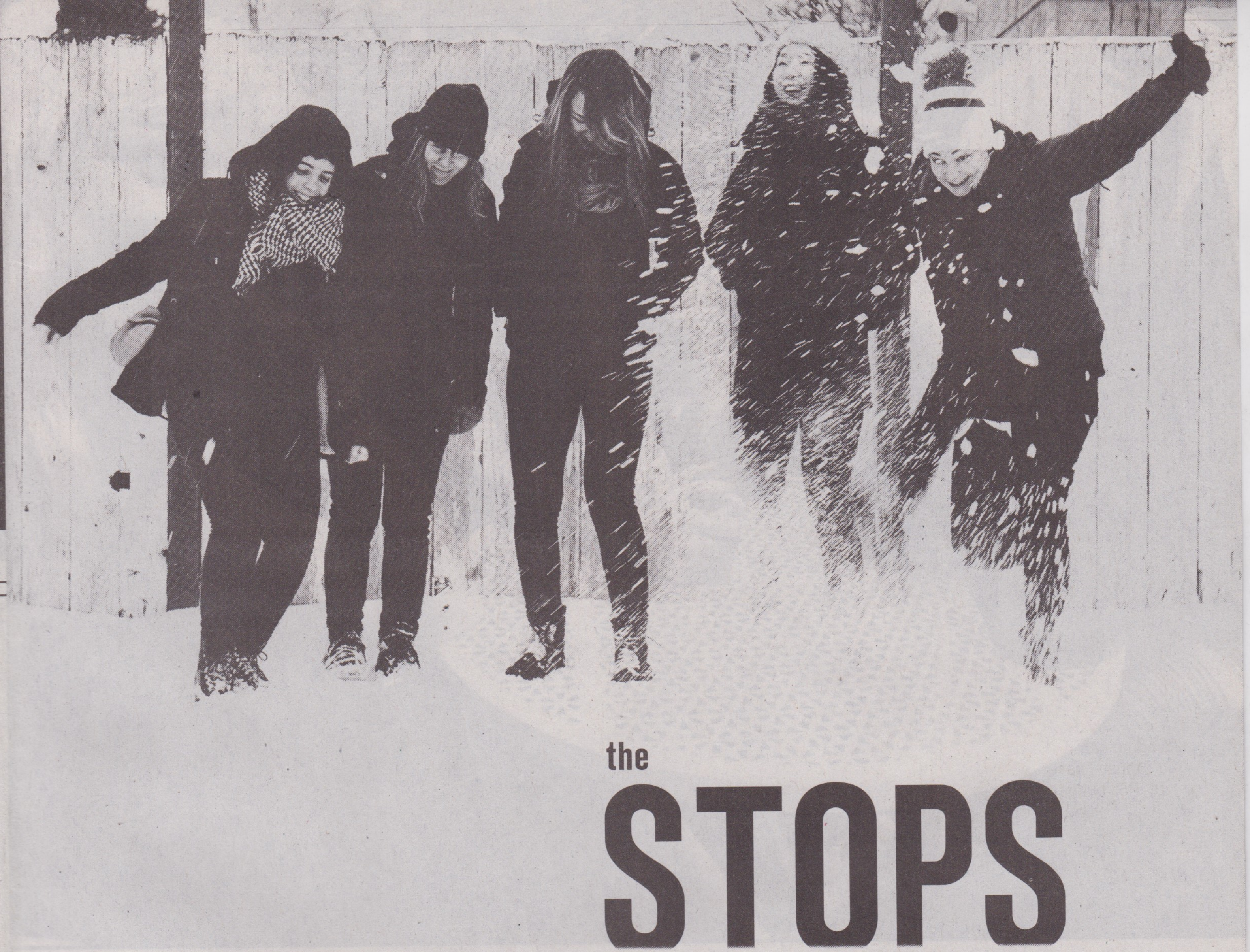
MRR: I think if you played all of the instruments on the record, you're entitled to do that.
Yeah. I'm obviously the best player on the record.

MRR: And also the worst!
Yeah.

MRR: What's coming out on vinyl?
In September, a Sick Thoughts 7" will be out on a label called No Front Teeth. They're a label out of the United Kingdom. It's a solid record. I hope it does well. That'll support my tour to Finland. I hope to sell every copy before I come home.

MRR: You're touring Finland and Sweden with the Achtungs, correct?
Yeah. We'll be on tour from September 15 till October 4. I'm not sure of the show dates yet, but it'll be seven or eight shows. Only one or two dates will be in Sweden, the rest in Finland.

MRR: You've been doing this for three years and you're still only eighteen. What lessons have you learned?
Don't flood the market with records. Don't trust crust punks. Don't trust anybody that wears a denim vest. Keep your shit together. Don't be a dick. And especially don't get drunk and talk a lot of shit over a mic.



the STOPS

The Stops have a vibe. It's hard to pick up on at shows, or other loud environments where the punks frequent, but it's there if you pay attention. So serious, these female performers in a patriarchal world. So determined, to enjoy themselves as five busy women making time and space for their band. Now, just after the release of their first full-length album, on the eve of a European tour, we sit down with The Stops at a picnic table in Northeast Portland and discuss where they came from, where they're going, and some whens and whys and hows.

Interview by Erin Yanke and Chanel Adair. Photos by Katie B., Aaron Sharpsteen, and Nick Powell. Thanks also to Lydia Crumbley and Samantha Gladu.

Ruby: guitar, vocals   Fukuko: drums
Rita: guitar   Lizzie: vocals   Cissie: bass

MRR: How did you start playing your instrument, and why?

Ruby: I just wanted to play guitar. I was thirteen and I asked for a guitar for Christmas, and I got a pretty little guitar and a tiny practice amp to go with it. My mom got me a year of lessons, and I just went to the guy and asked him to learn songs that I thought were cool.

MRR: What songs?

Ruby: Uh…I know there were some Led Zeppelin songs…

MRR: That's not very beginner…

Ruby: One of my first songs was "Stairway to Heaven," ironically. And probably bad '90s alternative bands that I can't remember anymore. Maybe Blind Melon. Definitely Nirvana.

Fukuko: I really wanted to play drums, I don't know why. When I was living in my hometown, I got my drum set, but there are no basements in Japan, and between houses there is no space. Then I moved to Tokyo. I know some people just go to a studio to play, but it's expensive. I didn't even have my own band, so it didn't really make sense to go

there and pay so much money to play drums. And then I moved here [Portland] and I started learning by myself.

Rita: Some friends of mine asked me to join their band, but I had never touched a guitar until that day. I was seventeen or something. So then I forced myself to learn guitar to play with them. We played for two years, it was a band called As Mercedes in Brazil. When we broke up I didn't play for a while. When the Stops asked me to join the band I was like "Yeah!" but it was rough at the beginning because I didn't play for so long.

Ruby: You were excited and a little hesitant at the same time.

Lizzie: I started playing piano when I was five, and I started singing in the fourth grade. I did a lot of choir and musical theater in high school. This is the first band that I've sung in that I haven't had an instrument in front of me as well, so it's been an interesting experience. Singing is fun.

MRR: What was your favorite high school musical that you were in?

Lizzie: *West Side Story*. I was in the chorus.

Cissie: I played guitar first. I got a guitar when I was sixteen. It just made sense, and I didn't have anyone I wanted to start a band with so I was playing by myself anyways. But I never really learned how to play it because I was too punk to go to the lessons.

Rita: I didn't go to lessons either…I wish I had!

Cissie: I ended up trading that guitar in for a bass when I was like…twenty. I decided I wanted to play bass. It was actually because I found the bass that I play in the Stops, the clear bass —

Lizzie: You've had it for that long??

Cissie: Yeah. I really wanted the bass because I thought it looked cool. So I bought that and started playing in bands.

MRR: So how did The Stops start? It seems like Ruby maybe you were the ringleader? Why start a band? Why join a band?

Ruby: Well it all starts with the Spice Girls. I remember being really into them in the '90s and thinking it was so super-cool that a bunch of women were in a band together.

Fukuko: Did any of them play instruments?

Ruby: No, they're all singers. It didn't matter, regardless—I was inspired. When I was in elementary school we were already trying to start a band. It was similar with all vocals, called the Ice Girls. This is the first time I've ever told anyone this actually. *[collective laughter]*

Ruby: I actually remember having an argument because one girl was like, "We can also be called the Spice Girls" and I was like, "We can't do that, it's gotta be different."

So fifteen, sixteen, the thought of being in an all-girl band was still cool, and I had started playing guitar, so I thought "I can do this." I kept trying to make it happen for years—there were a lot of failed attempts. Fukuko and I started playing with other people initially and they all quit or it didn't work out. She played bass originally, and then when everything fell apart she was like, "Actually, I really wanna play drums." So we started practicing with her on drums, just the two of us, and then we slowly started adding one person at a time. It was me and Fukuko, and then Cissie started playing with us after a couple months. Then Rita moved into the house I was living in at the time and I knew she played guitar, so we asked her to play. Then we had a singer for maybe a year and a half previously that didn't work out. So when we were looking for a new one, I saw Lizzie's band Pataha Hiss, and they were really good, and we asked her if she wanted to join. So it was maybe three years for the five of us to get together.

MRR: And the five of you have been together for…?

Lizzie: Two years? We got together in May 2013.

MRR: So what made you all say "Yes!"?

Cissie: I had just moved to town a few months before. I wasn't playing in a band, I was working three days a week—I had plenty of time. And I wanted to play music and I knew Fukuko …and it was fun.

Lizzie: It was a personal challenge and an opportunity to collaborate with songwriting and stuff, because I'm used to doing that on my own.

Ruby: Lizzie almost didn't say yes.

Lizzie: That's true. I kinda sat on it for a while. My boyfriend at the time had to push me to do it. But I'm glad I did. It's worked out well so far.

Rita: I had just moved into town…because of the other bands I wasn't sure if I wanted to do it. But I'm glad I joined the band. Plus they were practicing in my basement, so…

Ruby: We had three practices without Rita while she was in the house, actually. And then it was like "Hey, the girl upstairs plays guitar…maybe we should ask her to come downstairs…"

Rita: So I did.

Fukuko: I always wanted to be in a band, but I didn't know how to start. So when Ruby asked me, I was like "Okay, finally somebody asked me!"

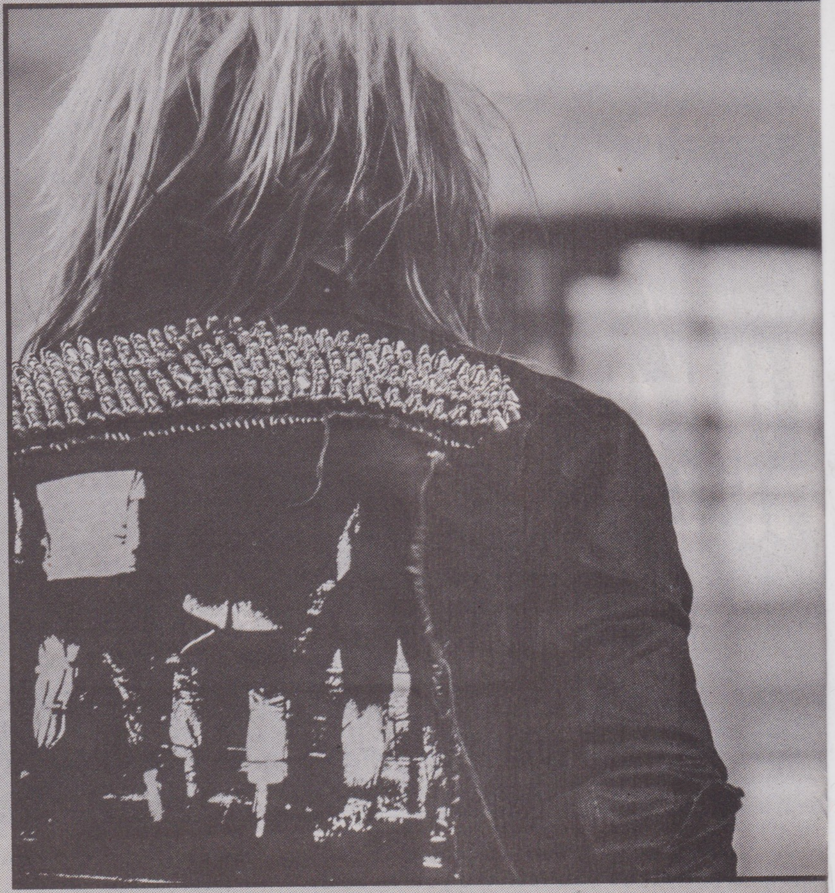
MRR: Rita, you're from Brazil, and Fukuko you're from Japan, what's the perspective that you've brought to the band, not being from Portland and not being from the States?

Rita: In Brazil, a lot of the places have backlines…that was a thing I had to learn, you have to buy your own shit and bring it everywhere you go. I wasn't used to that. In Brazil most people don't have basements to practice in all the time so you have to pay for a studio. There's always a lot of money put into it. And instruments in general in Brazil I feel are more expensive, so it took me a lot longer to be able to buy a guitar. It took me a while to buy a combo. It's a really expensive thing to do.

MRR: Does that affect who plays music?

Rita: Oh, a lot, and it affects the sound too, you know, because sometimes you're playing and you don't get to pick how you sound. That's why a lot of Brazilian punk, especially from the '80s, sounds really raw. You're playing with whatever you have around you, and a lot of the time it's really shitty. I played with my brother's old guitar, which had a cracked neck when I got it. So I think it changes that perspective, I mean when you get older you start learning about what kind of sound you want, what instruments you want to play with.

Fukuko: I came here in 2007, and the first thing I was really surprised by was that the shows were so cheap. Only like $5 or $8…in Japan we have to pay like $20 or $25, that's normal, so I'd never thought "Whoa, that's so expensive to go to a show!" Here it is super cheap. I was surprised by younger punks and older punks hanging out together. Older punks are really friendly to younger punks. Younger punks hang out with older punks. I think it's so cute! It's not like that in Japan. In Japan, you have to respect older people, I know that's a good thing, but sometimes it's too much. Some older punks won't even talk to younger punks, and younger punks are afraid of talking to older punks, so they don't really hang out. Here, all the punks hang out together, play cards, do skateboarding…I think that's really cute!



MRR: How do the Stops decide to do what you do?

Ruby: We have a really hard time deciding anything, actually.

Cissie: We can all agree on one thing…that it's hard to agree.

Rita: We all have really different points of view on everything, so everything turns into a discussion…

Lizzie: …and sometimes it goes on for a really long time…

Ruby: I feel like it makes us stronger too because we've gotten really good at dealing with that. We just know now that every time we have to make a decision it's going to take a long time to figure it out, and we know that we're not going to agree—

Rita: —and I think we try to be really respectful with each other.

MRR: Do you want to give an example of a decision that actually happened?

Lizzie: The band name!…

Fukuko: The band name…the t-shirt design…Everything! Colors…logo…

Ruby: Right now I think we're having a really hard time coming up with cover songs. This is the most recent dilemma.

Cissie: We played a Young Wasteners cover for a while, but we haven't been able to really pick another one.

MRR: What do you want to cover that no one else wants to cover?

Lizzie: I really wanna cover Protex. No one else is into that. All my covers have been shot down so I've given up at this point!

Cissie: I don't really think I've brought anything up. I just listen to what everyone else suggests and then say "yay" or "nay".

Rita: Minor Threat! That was a while back. I can't remember which one. But it didn't happen.

Cissie: I think I've suggested the Ramones before and it got denied, but yesterday we were talking about covering a Ramones song.

Ruby: It's been decided actually.

Cissie: Rita thinks it is too generic to cover the Ramones.

Rita: Well being from Brazil, bands cover Ramones songs all the time. Bands don't do that here very much, so it's refreshing to cover them, but growing up in Brazil that was the main band people covered.

Cissie: Because they were the first [punk] band that toured Brazil?

Rita: Yeah, totally.

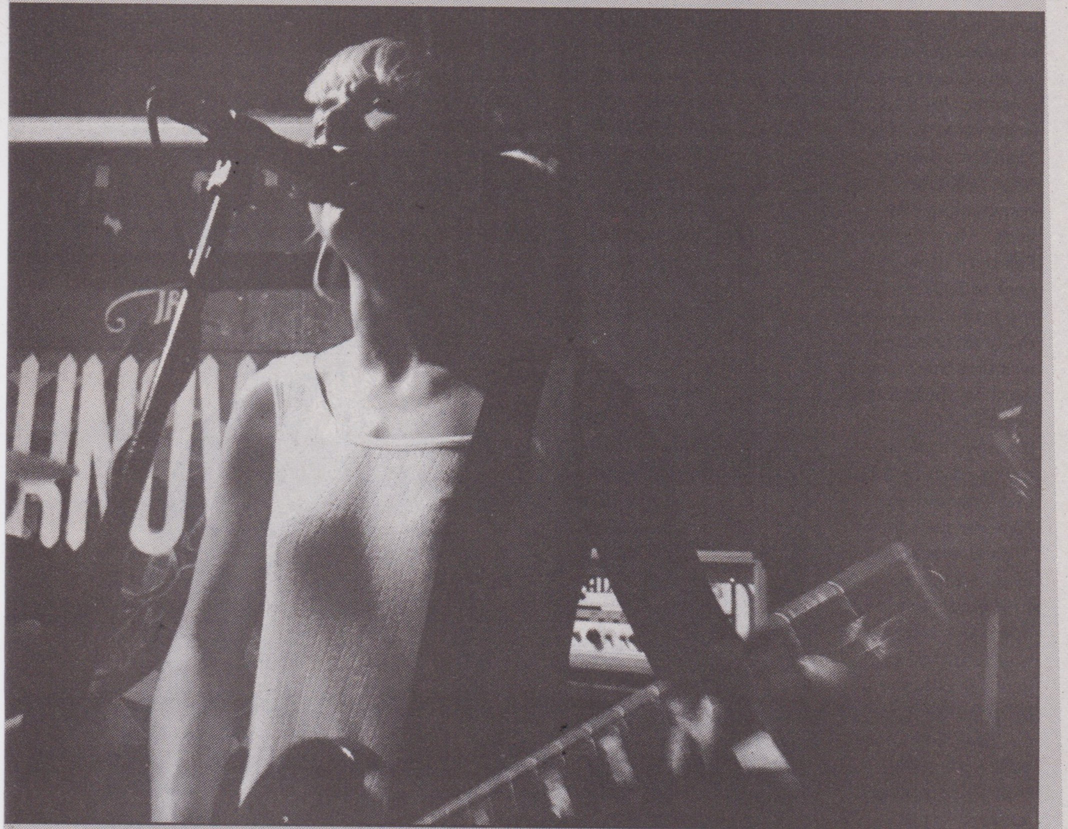
Cissie: We've talked about doing a girl group but we've never actually picked a song.

Lizzie: I'd like to do like a Shangri-Las or a Crystals song, or the Ronettes or something.

Cissie: Fukuko wants to cover Cock Sparrer.

Fukuko: Someday we will.

MRR: You talked about the history, and lineup changes, but there have been a lot of changes, like [Fukuko] now you're a mom, jobs are changing all the time, and immigration stuff,



joining other bands, et cetera et cetera. How do you feel like you've dealt with them as a band?

Cissie: I think the reason why we don't play all that often and why it took us so long to even play our first show is that we're all just very busy and we're all doing very different things. We're in school, we're at work, or Fukuko goes to visit her family in Japan for a month or Rita goes to visit her family in Brazil for a month. Everyone has their own things going on outside of the band. So that just makes things slower. And then we'll have really big periods of productivity like when we recorded the LP.

Ruby: Yeah when we're all in town and being productive we've been getting once a week practices in pretty consistently for several months at a time. It's enough so that we're not totally stifled due to taking a long break.

MRR: Do you still work on music during those long breaks? What is it about the Stops that makes you able to take breaks and not drift…

Rita: The band is in the back of our minds all the time, every day. So we just keep on going, there's always something. Like every week we're like "What do we have to do? What's the next step?" There's always something, there's like a show or a recording, the LP coming out…

Ruby: We're always planning.

Cissie: Yeah even when we're inactive we're planning. With Fukuko having a baby, she stopped playing in April, and she's probably not gonna start playing with us again until November. But we were able to get Mike from Defect Defect to play drums, and he picked up the songs right away because he's been playing for so long.

MRR: And he's been watching the band for a long time.

Cissie: Yeah, so it's a pretty easy transition. So that was good that we were able to keep it going without Fukuko.

Lizzie: Even though we miss her.

Fukuko: We always try to think about what we can do and then we're still together. I really like that fact, it's still five of us playing together. And maybe in the future the same thing will happen. I'm hoping the five of us together can still play music. I think that's one of the greatest things.

Rita: Yeah, I think we always work around schedules. We don't get mad with each other because we have stuff to do, we just have to work around it.

MRR: But plenty of bands don't—I do think it's pretty unusual that you can have a history with long pauses and not lose anything in those pauses. I'm not privy to the planning and all the other stuff that happens, but I also think when that does happen it's usually because people have been friends for like, twenty years. But you all became friends when you started this band, so that makes it interesting.

Ruby: Yeah… yeah. You're making us all wonder how we did it too!

Rita: It's a lot of work but I feel like we like the band so much that we figure it out.

Fukuko: Yeah I like that. I feel like we all care about that process, we're not like, "Oh, we just want to play shows, just want to make records" and then—done. We care about the process.

Cissie: Well next time someone leaves the country for a month, I'm out!

MRR: That was not the point of the question!

Lizzie: I also feel like the way that the band sounds has evolved and is continuing to evolve. So that keeps everybody interested in what we're trying to create together.

Ruby: Yeah I would say everybody's been happy with where it's going. The next awesome endeavor is ahead of us, so even if we have to take breaks we come back to it. We're always excited about the next thing that we're going to do, so the breaks are okay because we come back and we have a plan. We know that there is momentum there still, and that momentum hasn't faded.

MRR: How do the Stops fit into punk as an oppositional culture?

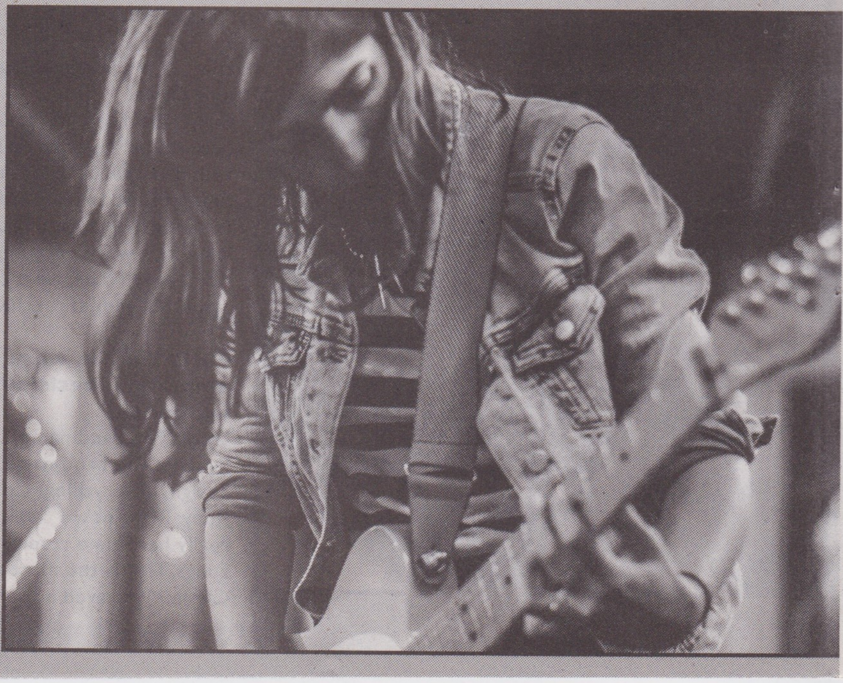
Lizzie: We definitely subscribe to the whole DIY thing, as in we're trying to do everything ourselves, and I don't think any of us are doing it for financial gain… we're doing it because it's something that we're passionate about.

MRR: Do you think punk is an oppositional culture?

Cissie: I grew up in a small town in the south, so being punk there is still really weird—I think you definitely feel oppositional. But being in Portland, it's really hard to feel oppositional because there is a community, there are spaces. We're playing the Know tonight, a punk club that has tons of shows and you're going to see everyone you know and it's comfortable. There's Blackwater—it's pretty easy and safe to be a punk here.

Lizzie: Since I'm responsible for most of the lyrical content… I don't really have anything to say that's oppositional, so I don't know, I just say things that I'm thinking about.

Ruby: We're not a really political band, so I don't



think we're trying to make a point of bringing up issues or bringing light to political things as much as writing about simple, mundane things, personal things . We're not making so much of a statement in terms of being oppositional.

Lizzie: That's a good way to put it. I think we're more interested in creating a sound musically and melodically, instead of a statement.

MRR: Ruby you talked about seeing the Spice Girls as a kid and being inspired by seeing women onstage performing music. Did that influence you to deliberately form a band with other women? Do you think that's a part of you responding to the lack of all-female bands out there or is that just something you were stoked on?

Rita: It's not in the lyrics but it's behind everything. A lot of the times we play shows with other women, and I love that. But one time this guy booked us for a show and was like "Oh, that's so funny, that you all have women in your bands!" and we were like "Dude, you probably did that on purpose".

Lizzie: He totally did it on purpose!"

Rita: I mean I love that people do that but it's so cliche. Every time that someone writes a review about us they always say "all-female." It's never just "a band."

Lizzie: Yeah it doesn't happen with dudes. I remember when we first released the demo there was this guy who wrote us a review: "Well they're not really doing anything to break the mold of the girl group" and it was just like, "Oh fuck, who cares??"

Ruby: It was something along the lines of—it's become kind of a joke actually—"nothing special for an all-female band." No one would ever say "it's nothing special for an all-male band."

MRR: Oh you just gotta start saying it! "Nothing special for the all-dude category!"

Ruby: We do now, totally!

Rita: But it's awesome to hear people responding so positively, and being an all girl band and people still supporting us all the time. With society being so fucked up towards women – It's really good to see people being positive about it.

MRR: So if one of you left the band, would you deliberately pick another woman to replace that person?

Ruby: Well we have Mikey on drums now. But a couple years ago I would have definitely cared.

MRR: Is that because Mike is just a transitional fill-in? If it was someone permanent would it be different?

Ruby: We knew that Mike was just a temp while Fukuko's taking care of her baby, so it was not a hard decision to be okay with that—he's our friend and he's really good. For me it wouldn't matter so much anymore, but at the same time it's been really awesome to be an all-girl band for the level of comfort and respect that goes with that. There is something special about having the girl friendship bond, I know it sounds cheesy. Back to your prior question, aesthetically I think the concept of an all-girl band is just like a really cool thing. But also growing up, I sometimes felt like I was growing up in a boy's club, even though punk is a thing where everyone is supposed to be accepting and more gender-friendly. In hindsight I sometimes didn't feel as welcome as I wanted to be, so maybe subconsciously I was trying to fight back and deal with it. Now, 2015 in Portland, there are so many female musicians in bands now.

Lizzie: Every band I've played in has been mixed gender

Cissie: Still the number of all-male bands versus all-female bands is huge. It's very lopsided.

MRR: It's absurd. Ruby, I remember when I met you I didn't even know that you played guitar, and it turned out you'd been doing it for ten years...did you find it hard to find people to play music with?

Ruby: Yeah, I remember as a teenager trying to find people to start bands with and feeling like I could never be picked. I was intimidated, I don't think I was good at sticking up for myself. I was trying; I also thought that everyone was better at guitar than me. I don't feel like it's difficult anymore. I can work with men or women and it's about music.

MRR: You are touring Europe soon. Why tour Europe first instead of the States? What do you expect from Europe, what can Europe expect from you?

Ruby: Our record is coming out in Europe before it comes out in the United States. When Franz [Sabotage Records] contacted us and said "I really wanna do an LP for you guys" we were stoked about it. He mentioned he would do a tour for us if we wanted to in the future. It seemed promising.

MRR: Who's your US label?

Lizzie: Dirt Cult. Based out of Portland.

Rita: Our records are gonna be pressed at that new Cascade record plant that just opened up here in town, so I'm really excited about that.

Lizzie: It's local, it's organic, it's sustainable.

MRR: Farm to table. So you have a full-length LP that's sort of out...you took a long time to record it. What was that experience like? Did the length of time add or subtract from the experience?

Rita: I think it goes back to all of us being busy with our lives. We wanted it to sound the way we wanted, so we had to keep coming back to it. Tracking everything was only four days. What took longer was us having to break it down to a few hours at a time for mixing.

Lizzie: And then Franz asked us to do a split EP with Daily Ritual [Singapore], so as soon as we were done with the record we went back to the studio for the EP. So it just seemed like it got drawn out for a long time.

Ruby: We recorded the 7" but still hadn't finished mixing the LP…I'd say overall everything went well. Part of it comes down to Adam [Becker, of Red Lantern Studios] being so easy to work with and catering to everything.

Cissie: Adam has an appearance on the record playing tambourine. He's really good at playing tambourine.

MRR: What would be the best possible outcome for the Stops in the future?

Cissie: Future?? We live in the moment!

Rita: I think I just want to tour whenever we can tour, record when we can record, play shows. It might take a little while.

Ruby: Doing what we're doing now on repeat.

Lizzie: I really enjoy the collaborative aspect of being in a band and developing and evolving the way that we sound. I think we all do it because we all enjoy it so much and we get along pretty well. There are no delusions of grandeur.

Ruby: Yeah I don't think we have any grandiose ambitions.

Fukuko: I'd love to go to Japan, and I'd really love to go to Brazil, but it's challenging for me because I have a baby now. I hope the baby's going to be an independent baby, comfortable by herself or something. Feed herself.

Lizzie: We could take turns taking care of her.

Rita: Except when we play…

Ruby: Just put her in an isolation booth and let her roll around.

MRR: Some bands I know tour with babies. You need a roadie and a nanny.

Lizzie: That sounds like a romance novel. *The Roadie and the Nanny.*

MRR: That's the name of the next album!

thestops.bandcamp.com

October 2: Tübingen
October 3: Munich
October 4: Leipzig
October 5: Hamburg
October 6: Cologne
October 7: TBA
October 8: Paris
October 9: TBA
October 10: Basque Country
October 11: Madrid
October 12: Zaragoza
October 13: Barcelona
October 14: Lyon
October 15: Geneva
October 16: Basel
October 17: TBA
October 18: Vienna
October 19: Zagreb
October 20: Budapest
October 21: Brno
October 22: Berlin
October 23: Hannover
October 24: Bremen

the
STOPS

ragana

My relationship with Ragana started at the Cockpit in Seattle in 2014—watching them play live was an undeniably and indescribably powerful experience. I approached them immediately after their set and asked if they would like me to release an LP for them on my women- and POC-centered anti-fascist metal/noise label, An Out Recordings. This rulin' interview is done on the eve of their album Wash Away's release and prior to their US tour. Fuckin' sweeeet. Introduction and interview by Anna Vo. Photos by Ali Bektas and Loco Lark.

MRR: Tell us about your history as a band. How did you meet? Why the relocation?

MARIA: Nicole and I met in Olympia, Washington in fall 2011. We had a mutual friend who said we would probably like each other, and then we ran into each other at Grocery Outlet and a few days later Nicole came over to my house and we started playing music! Everything musically was really uncertain at first. I think we talked about playing metal but I also wanted to play punk or pop punk or something. At first I played guitar and Nicole played drums and we didn't switch.

NICOLE: My favorite part of the story is that the first thing we ever did together was go to this park and gather sticks and twigs and moss for the fireplace, and then we went to Maria's house and made a fire and then tried to play music. Definitely at first we tried a lot of different things out, which you can hear on "666," which is pretty much the first four songs we wrote combined into one. One day we decided to switch and I played "B.N.F." on guitar which was a song I had been messing around with for a few years. I think that when we began switching instruments was when it really started to feel like more of a concrete thing. We both have really different songwriting styles that complement each other in weird ways and switching places does something interesting to the energy and power dynamics of the band.

So we were a band for a year and half and then I decided to go to herb school in Northern California. My original plan had been to go back to Olympia afterward so we could keep doing the band but then Maria decided she needed a break from the Northwest and decided to move to Oakland, and since my sister and some friends also lived here I thought I would stay in the Bay Area, and now it's been two years...

MRR: What was the impetus or concept around starting? Any specific intentions?

NICOLE: We were both in a place where we wanted to start a new musical project. As far as intentions, we both were always interested in the band being a political project in some ways, in the sense that we naturally write lyrics that reflect our varying struggles and the ways we think about the world and experience it through a particular set of circumstances. It has always been important to us to talk about what our songs are about at shows and stuff, and I think that helps people connect with it also, and makes shows feel more intimate and personal.

Also, it feels special and important to be making the kind of music we make as women, because in my experience it is still so rare to see women expressing rage and ugliness and fury in music. It is always really inspiring for me when there are bands where people who are not cis men are taking up space in that way. For me personally, as an introverted person and as someone assigned female who has a lot of feelings about gender, the public visibility aspect of playing shows still feels so intense to me, and it feels like a place of personal power for me to willingly put myself in a position where people are staring at me, allowing myself to scream, to make weird shapes with my face and body, to be on the precipice of this abyss of ugliness, hostility, vulnerability, unintelligibility—at least that is what it feels like to me. And I have always felt like performing songs, or performing anything really, is like making a spell, rearranging energy or channeling it into new shapes where new feelings of possibility or ways of being/feeling can be found.

MARIA: My intention was to be Nicole's friend! She was so cool and mysterious. When the mystery wore off (just kidding, she's still mysterious as fuck!) I wanted to be in a really emotionally driven music project where I could play softly and sing about things I cared so much about and in the same set scream over blast beats and heavy distortion. I wanted to play music I didn't see enough women playing. I wanted to show people that heavy music wasn't just men playing in drop D really well with good expensive gear. Nicole and I had really busted gear for a long time!

I feel like our intention has changed over the years, I think it's always changing with every show we play and song we write. When we first started I think we just wanted to see if we could be ourselves and write long weird complicated songs and be women on stage performing "metal" or whatever you want to call it. And we could! And we're still doing it!

MRR: Yay! Can you tell us specifically how the band is a political project?

NICOLE: I meant it in the sense that we write lyrics that are explicitly political, we are anti-capitalist anarchist people, and we want to talk with people about those kinds of ideas and struggles. We don't think it's even possible to make music publicly in an apolitical way! And also in the sense that it is still rare to see people with our identities making heavy, rageful music, so hopefully in some small way we are expanding the possibilities of what is possible and making more room for marginalized people and also just being able to connect with other rad musicians who are already out here.

MARIA: I hope our music gives people the chance to feel powerful who usually don't get to feel powerful. I hope people find comfort in our rage. I hope we inspire other people to express themselves against capitalism and patriarchy and racism. I struggle with the idea of political art, I question its importance often. Especially in music when every day we hear that someone in some band we grew up loving actually is some fucked up asshole or when the coolest band in your town or your scene is a bunch of apolitical college kids with too much time and money. For me, I don't have a choice, I make music because sometimes its the only things that keeps me sane. I can scream to a crowd about my traumas and fears and hopes. And before a song I can talk about what it was like coming from a military family and having a mother immigrate here from the Philippines and my fear of the future and hate of everything. If we are political it is because we inspire other women and other marginalized identities to do the same. At least I hope we do!

MRR: Could you talk about certain songs and their topics, and how people react to their meaning when you talk about them live?

MARIA: The song "Alive" was the most recent song I wrote on guitar. The lyrics were written during the height of the Ferguson riots. When Mike Brown was shot to death by cop Darren Wilson and Ferguson rioted, everything changed. Being in Oakland during the riots was like something I've never felt before. It sounds really cheesy but I felt alive in a way that felt I hadn't ever, and it was so sad 'cause it was all surrounding something so tragic. This song is interesting to me because it feels like the opposite of a lot of the songs I write, I'm usually inspired by the tragedies of how mundane and destructive life is but I found myself inspired and feeling full of life at what was happening around me. The lyrics in the song are "let there be breath that I see at night / fire, broken glass, and the push to feel alive." I think those are the most positive lyrics I've ever written. The few times I've mentioned what this song is about on stage, I think I can feel the importance of that time for people. It's still relevant, it's not even close to being over, we're still pushing.

NICOLE: I think a lot of our lyrics are really about being in a place of uncertainty and being surrounded and engulfed and made up by these huge powerful systems and histories that we seem to have no real control over and sometimes even grasping full understanding of them seems impossible. Like cycles of abuse, like the violence of gender and race and imperialism, like watching the non-human world being destroyed, countless things that build up and feel so crushing and suffocating. I think the song that I have written that the most people have responded to is "Unbecoming," which is about my experience being gendered as a woman and wondering what that category "means" and feeling the ways that has confined me and the ways violence has been done to me because of it, and whether there is something else "beyond" coercively assigned gender, and kind of this desperate, overwhelming desire for my violently constituted body to be unmade and to just dissolve back into the mountains, into the world, in this transcendent, impossible-feeling way.

We don't think it's even possible to make music publicly in an apolitical way!

Sometimes I'm scared to try and talk about it during a show because it came from a place that feels too big and confusing to describe in front of mostly strangers but I know that other people have similar feelings too so ultimately it usually feels worth it to try. As much as we do like talking about songs, sometimes the point of music is that a feeling can't really be expressed as well in any other way, and for me this song proves that. It always feels like an intense and cleansing catharsis for me to play "Unbecoming" and it's probably the song that most people have said affects them and a lot of people have told me it makes them cry.

MRR: I saw you live for the first time in Seattle just after playing at a fest in Vancouver, in a queer space in Capitol Hill. The feedback I had heard that the fest had featured mostly bands with queer folk, women and/or POC. How much does identity play a role for you both, in regards to playing music or with this band?

MARIA: I've been thinking about this a lot as we currently book our tour! A lot of people want to book us with metal bands or anything thrashy or heavy, which is awesome! But I think I realized that identity is really important to me. I'm always excited to play with a band that musically "makes sense" or whatever but I'm so much more excited if there's someone within a marginalized identity in that band! From my experience while trying to play music and be involved in a music scene, I know how hard it is to be a woman! I definitely grew up going to my boyfriend's shows and watching men play music, feeling really separated and isolated from it all. It's such a struggle to be taken seriously and to take yourself seriously! After my experiences volunteering at queer rock camp and girls rock camp you really see what's

it's like to be a young queer or young woman struggling to believe in yourself as a musician. All the young women and queers I've worked with talk about being discouraged from playing music. There is no equality in music, we're still fighting for marginalized identities to be seen and heard. I can appreciate anyone playing music and being in a band, but my mind is always on the struggle. I'm never not thinking about the importance of identity. I would play with any type of band and love it if I knew the members experienced similar struggles I did, and were rad people! Everyone who wants to make music should, but I know it's fucking harder for some of us! And I will never forget that.

MRR: What releases have you made up until this upcoming LP? How have you two prepared for it, creatively/musically?
NICOLE: We have self-released two tapes so far: *All's Lost* in June 2012 and *Unbecoming* in January 2013. After we went on tour with Unbecoming, I left for a year to go to herb school. Most of the songs that I wrote on guitar on our new album were written during that year, when I was alone a lot in rural Northern California, in the redwoods. That experience of writing songs by myself over a whole year was so different compared to the short span of time we wrote the other two albums in. It was nice not having pressure to finish anything quickly but to still know that someday we would be in the same place again playing music. I was just like obsessed with the intro that Maria had written for the song "Wash Away" before I left Olympia and I kept trying to write things like that.
MARIA: Most of the songs I wrote on guitar were written during a period of time I was alone a lot in a dish pit. I don't think the way I prepared creatively for this album has been any different from the way All's Lost or Unbecoming was. Each song is always paid lots of attention and they are all so different and filled with different parts. I think this album like our other albums is a representation of what we were thinking and feeling and going through at the time when we were apart and when we moved in together in Oakland in 2013. So I guess we just did what we always do: we wrote songs about the things we were feeling and made an album. We will probably do it forever and ever and ever. We write songs all the time and we're already ready to start recording new songs! I think this album just took so long because we were both so busy with school and moving. Not to say this album isn't special! It is! I think what I'm trying to say is the creative process of making a record for us is constant. We are never not making a record and they will probably all be different and special.

MRR: Tell us about the release process so far.
NICOLE: This release process has been a little different because making a vinyl takes forever and requires so much forethought and waiting! It's also different cause this time we are on a label. We didn't want to do it with just any random apolitical metal person, so it was really exciting to meet you and find out about An Out Recordings and realize that there is an explicitly anarchist, queer, feminist, anti-racist metal label out there in the world.

MRR: What has the response been so far?
MARIA: The response has been great! My friends tell me they are excited. But maybe they are just saying that 'cause they're my friends. I hope with this record release people tell me they cried listening to the song "Tired" because it's about my mom and songs written for moms are special.
NICOLE: So far the response has been really positive, kind of overwhelmingly so! I think people are excited cause it's been so long since we put anything out, and also having the album be on vinyl is really exciting. But the

anticipation and the "official-ness" of vinyl also make it a little bit scary. I just hope people like it and feel things and want to listen to it again.

MRR: Awww! Where and how much have you toured? Tell us about this upcoming tour.

NICOLE: We have been on three shorter tours so far. Our first two were west coast tours—first was in summer 2012 with our friends from Olympia, Curved Graves and Romantic Feelings and in January 2013 we went on tour with Hot Tears. Last March we went on a little tour of the Northeast with Margy Pepper and got to play Smash it Dead Fest in Boston which was really cool.

This is a six-week tour that is mostly US but with one Mexico show and three Canada shows. It's our first time touring in a lot of places like the south, the midwest, and eastern Canada, so that is really exciting. The first week or so we are touring with our friends' band Nasty Dilemma from Oakland, which I am really looking forward to cause it's their first tour and they are really dreamy and great. And then on the east coast, we are doing some dates with Correspondences, which is one of my all-time favorite most inspiring dark heavy beautiful bands so I am totally thrilled about that. But for most of it it's just gonna be the two of us driving in a van so hopefully our friendship will survive this journey...And we definitely want to tour Europe next summer!

MARIA: Did you say "Hopefully our friendship will survive this journey"?!

NICOLE: Of course it will as long as we always have snacks in the car...

MARIA: I think we should see a couple's therapist.

MRR: Will you be keeping a tour diary? Where is the best place to follow your daily adventures?

MARIA: I got really into taking pictures and documenting lately. I'm excited to post pictures of tour on our facebook and on our tumblr which is growsrots.tumblr.com

MRR: Are there any political movements that you are particularly invested in at the moment?

MARIA: I just started a distro with my friend! It's called Other Weapons distro. We sell tazers for cheap and have Aileen Wuornos posters and zines about sex work solidarity and history. This was a project wrapped up in another project we started to create a social space for women and queers to meet and work on anarchist projects together. We had a really beautiful space, but unfortunately the building caught on fire, forcing us to move out. So the search continues for a new space! You can email us at otherweaponsdistro@gmail.com

NICOLE: This year I have been interning with a prison abolitionist organization called Justice Now in Oakland. We work with people in California women's prisons mostly around issues of healthcare access and compassionate release, and we also do campaign work. Justice Now was a big part of bringing to light the fact that hundreds of people were being given sketchy, nonconsensual sterilization operations while in prison, and in getting California's SB1135 passed, which made that practice illegal. It's an amazing organization that is especially notable because most of the board members are people currently in prison or formerly in prison. I've learned so much there and have gotten to work with some really incredible people both inside and outside prison and I would encourage anyone in the Bay Area to check out their info and get involved in anti-prison work. Their website is jnow.org

MRR: Anything else you would like to add?

MARIA: Shout out to my dog (actual dog) Kaia, for always keeping it true and real.

ragana.bandcamp.com / growsrots@gmail.com / anout.bandcamp.com

MODERN

INTRODUCTION BY MIHAEL ČUČEK
INTERVIEW BY TAIGA DINGER

Modern Delusion is a trio from Zagreb, Croatia featuring Goran Lautar, ex-member and frontman of Dykemann Family, the Babies, and Welcomin' Committee In Flames fame; Dirt Sleeze, ex-member of now-defunct Black Gust and Daily Trash, and new on the scene, Darija Turina. Unlike the aforementioned bands, Modern Delusion aims for something quite different: synth-oriented, gloomy post-punk with obvious influences from zillions of obscure Back from the Grave and Killed By Death comps and maybe even some Crypt Records stuff. If you'd like me to drop some names, think the Lost Sounds, or Jay Reatard's earlier project Angry Angles mixed with some classic stuff like Devo, the Units, Siouxsie and the Banshees, etc.

At first, the band recorded six original songs plus a Crime cover on a primitive four-track recorder, and Doomtown Records put that out. There's a reissue of the tape out now on Crapoulet Records from France. The band recorded three numb hymns in their traditional synth-punk/New Wave style and this time the songs were even darker and gloomier than on their debut Wasteland tape, released on a split 7" with Chresus Jist. The band recently released their debut LP Days of Us on Doomtown and Crapoulet Records.

Photos courtesy of Dusko Damjanovic

MRR: How did everyone get exposed to punk music in Croatia? There seems to be a pretty decent scene in Zagreb now, but has that always been around?

Dirt Sleeze: A neighbor gave me a compilation tape he wanted to throw away. There were some punk classics on it like the Exploited, Vibrators, UK Subs, and Stiff Little Fingers. I got hooked on it immediately. I was so young I didn't even know how a punk looked and what it felt like to be wasted. That random tape probably determined the course of my life. Zagreb was generally a boring place and that applied to punk also. There were some good shows occasionally, a poorly written fanzine to read, cheap booze to drink, and skinheads that beat you up, ruining that one interesting show you were waiting to see for weeks or even months. In the last few years it changed. The scene is better than ever. There are people playing in good bands and making excellent shows. It seems that everybody is somehow involved, and I think this is how it is supposed to be. Unfortunately, I don't see too many new kids around, at least not at the underground shows.

Darija Turina: I wasn't into this type of punk rock much before Modern Delusion. I was more focused on avant-garde music and bands like Residents or the Soft Machine. I got into punk rock more deeply with this band. Goran and Dirt called me one day, and we clicked, and started working together a year and half ago. I think that my coming from a bit of a different background fit perfectly in this new sound that they wanted to create. The thing that binds us is that we are all striving for the expression of ourselves rather than the matter of the genre. In a short period of time, so much has happened, many gigs and considerable amount of material. My ears are now totally tuned to the raw hissy sound that we make.

Goran Lautar: I've been listening to punk music since early teenagehood. It was a common thing for a couple of school weirdos living in the same huge community building. In the late '80s, the so-called heyday of early Yugoslavian punk/New Wave from the late '70s had already passed, so we kids didn't even listen to ex-Yugoslavian punk at all. We started with a familiar introduction like the Ramones, the Clash, the Ruts, and similar bands. I later discovered some real synth-punk gems from ex-Yugoslavia. Check out the late '70s Croatian songs like Mrtvi Kanal's "Oglasi," or Paraf's "Javna Kupatila." If you search for it online, you will be led to that great period of '77-'84 punk scene in ex-Yugoslavia, literally dozens of great bands. Eventually I slipped into post-punk, Killed By Death kind of bands, garage punk, and countless [others.]

In Zagreb nowadays? Yes, it's quite vibrant now. I mean, not many people for sure, but a generally enthusiastic atmosphere, much to the credit of guys from Doomtown Records and Club Attack, which are now well-known throughout the world punk scene. I guess it always comes in waves. We're glad to have a little role in this particular movement.

DeLUSION

MRR: Goran, how was your experience with the Babies, and did the end of your prior band influence the formation of Modern Delusion?

Goran: With the Babies, we had a great time and a great friendship. It lasted for seven years and in 2006 we decided it was enough. The only thing I wouldn't do again is release the first album with a local sort-of major label. We got pretty exposed, but eventually worked with people, who I have to say, didn't interfere with material but [also] didn't understand a shit what our music was about. On our second LP, we went DIY. This second album was produced and recorded by a great guy, Tim Kerr, and is only available on vinyl. We never put it online, we've been promising for years now, but we never moved our lazy asses. The band prior to Modern Delusion was Dykemann Family, which lasted for a few years, but moved away from the raw garage punk rock'n'roll to something closer to what Modern Delusion sounds like.

MRR: The classic punk sound has always been a favorite of mine and I think the keyboard brings a very familiar sound. What were your motivations in starting that band and having the keys play a big role in your rhythm section?

Goran: It was a challenge at first, going back to the sound and themes I always liked but actually never had a chance to explore in the more or less closed scheme of garage punk rock'n'roll. It's interesting where the music of Modern Delusion brings us, it's sort of new territory for all of us; and it's not all about sound, synth etc. but more about themes we challenge. Many people in the local scene connect my name with garage rock'n'roll proper, so Modern Delusion was a quite a shock for them, haha. I think it's not good to close yourself in a uniformed pattern of music, or at least for long. It's safe, it's so predictable and gets less and less fun. The next thing I plan is a one man, $10 synth project, haha.

MRR: Have you all been living in Croatia most your life? Did some of you have to experience the Croatian War of Independence?

Dirt: My parents moved to Zagreb when I was a kid, then the war started. I watched a lot of shit going on in the news and heard the air raid alarm a couple of times, but I couldn't actually comprehend what was going on and why it was happening. As I got older the mystery became even bigger.

Darija: I was also a small kid then, but I can vividly remember a general paranoia and disturbance. One day, it even materialized in my parent's flat when a friend of my parents who had just got back from the frontline brought a real hand grenade and sat it on our kitchen table, and in a frenzy outraged way, threatened to blast it. Obviously, me speaking here with you, the grenade never went off, haha.

Goran: Since I'm from an older generation than my bandmates, I was eighteen when the war broke out. I avoided military service by all means and spent the first couple of months in Germany; then when I got released of any potential service, I got back to Zagreb at the university, which was like twenty miles [from the] frontline. It was a real surreal peace and quiet compared to the less fortunate regions. Everything stopped: fun, naiveté, and for sure, music. Yes, it was the rebirth of a nation and a new country, blah blah exciting years, but it was eventually spoiled with hate and crime. In war times, rats come out of the closet and take over the whole society like they never had a chance in peace. Many of my generational peers spent some time on the frontlines. Most of them are different people now, with whom I can't even have a decent conversation, because they got stuck in the past and hate. And it will last for the rest of their lives. I'm so lucky I wasn't sucked into that.

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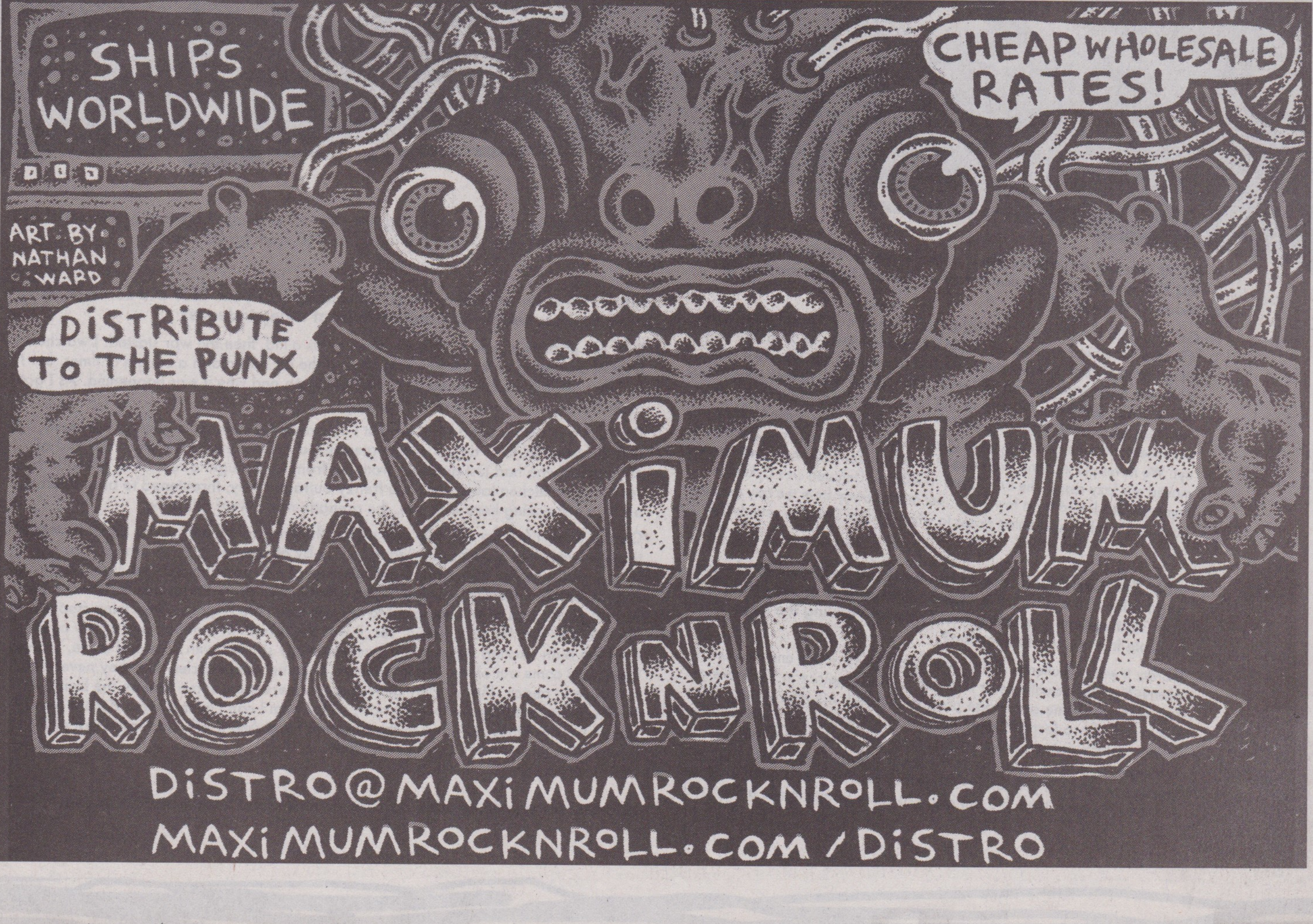
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MOTH

Moth is a four-member group from Copenhagen, Denmark. They have been around for about five years, managing to self-release two 7"s in Denmark and more recently two LPs, both of which were pressed in Europe as well as the US. Having roots in the Danish hardcore punk scene and close ties to the goth scene there, they prefer to maintain a middle ground combining what can be generalized as a post-punk sound with a punk DIY ethic. The musical tags are unavoidable, however the band remains intent on creating a sound they like themselves, without concern for which shelf in the library they are placed on.

Interview and introduction by Larry Nance (Bad Hair Life Records, USA). Photos courtesy of Stine Holme and Simon V.

Ellisiv: guitar || **Kim:** keys/synths/beats ||| **Patrick:** vocals || **Rune:** bass

MRR: When and how did Moth begin?

Patrick: Ellisiv and Patrick started out by doing a couple of demos in late summer 2011. It got kind of shelved until February 2012, when Rune and Kim joined. We'd been playing around in other projects, but decided we wanted to do some post-punk/cold-wave together, all four of us. Three months later, our first single was out as a 3-track 7".

Rune: Elli and Patrick needed a bass player, so they asked me. Patrick and I used to play in a hardcore band and we always had good chemistry, so I think both of us found it pretty natural to start playing together again.

MRR: You mentioned other projects. Can you name some of the other bands you've been involved with? Are any still active?

Patrick: I'm in the post-punk noise rock band Melting Walkmen, as was Elli for a couple of years. Kim was in Brain Illusion, and still plays with analog synth-punk duo Chainsaw Eaters. Kim is also doing a studio project with Johannah Jørgensen from Metro Cult called Artificial Monuments, recorded and mixed by Patrick.

Rune: I've always loved the Ramones and the Misfits, so most of the bands I've played in have been straight up punk rock. My first real band was the Rotten Leprechauns (I know, it's a horrible name). We played horror punk. Then there was Skind og Ben. We played depressing, fast-paced punk. There was also Selvhenter, with Pat, who played really fast hardcore and the Torpedo Zombies. This was minimalistic elektro-punk. I'm working on a new rockabilly/punk thing called Motorsav, but the only active band, currently, is Moth.

MRR: Everyone sounds busy enough with bands, but are there any other things that you are involved with: art, writing, activism?

Patrick: I occasionally do posters and illustrations for shows and covers. Elli has DJ'd for some years, anything from breakcore to cold-wave to harsh noise. Kim has done a few short films. We have done a fair amount of booking and helping out at shows and DIY festivals in different parts of Denmark, but mainly Copenhagen.

Rune: Other than music, I currently work for a production company, where I make models and sculpt figures for stop-motion movies. Other than that, I release records and produce my own line of action figures. I'm a huge fan of action figures from the '80s. I also do some freelance illustration. I'm not really politically active.

MRR: Do you all live in Copenhagen? How is the scene there? Are there venues for all-ages shows?

Patrick: Yes, we all live in Copenhagen. It's a relatively small city, but all things considered there is a pretty decent and active underground scene. A lot of effort is put into political events, supporting artists, soup kitchens, and DIY festivals. If you live in Copenhagen and are just starting out your DIY label, band, zine, or political event, people are good at helping each other out. Regarding the all-ages question, that's generally not really a thing here. You have to be 18 to buy alcohol, but other than that everyone is welcome to join.

Rune: I actually just moved to Copenhagen again, because I got a job offer I couldn't say no to. I like it over here. There is a great scene in Copenhagen; a lot of great people. The music scene is, to me, a bit bland. There aren't a lot of bands over here that fall into my taste. Though, the post-punk scene is growing fast, with some great bands. I just went to a concert the other day, where I discovered an amazing band called Prison—mind-blowing post-punk. Great stuff! Also, Metro Cult and Chainsaw Eaters are great!

MRR: About the soup kitchens, how do punks organize these in Copenhagen? Is this for other punks, or anyone needing assistance?

Patrick: They are open for everybody but are mainly visited by punks or people affiliated with the respective venues.

A delicious vegan meal for four dollars ain't too bad!
Rune: I think it's pretty much for anyone; it's really cool. I don't use it myself, but it's comforting to know that there are good people out there doing stuff like that!

MRR: With Moth, what are most of the songs about? What inspirations do you have? It would be great to hear about musical and non-musical inspirations.
Rune: I only wrote lyrics for two of the songs; they are about latex fetishism and getting old. Other than that, you should ask Patrick; he does pretty much all of them.
Patrick: The lyrics are mainly concerned with human emotions and the darker side of the psyche. There are no straight narratives in the songs, as they are usually done through a stream of consciousness process.

As for the inspiration for lyrics, I have great admiration for artists like Michael Gira and Nick Cave. Musically our inspiration is gathered from all over; we don't want to limit ourselves to specifics. We all watch a lot of movies and even though we won't do a song directly linked to any particular movie, or book for that matter, the general feel of the piece might have an influence on our work.

MRR: A song about getting old, does that happen to our breed?
Rune: I wrote that one on my 27th birthday; I guess the whole "growing up" thing just hit me out of nowhere.

MRR: So, Copenhagen sounds like a good place to make things happen. What about other cities in Denmark?
Patrick: That's a bit hard to answer. It seems there is stuff going on in cities like Odense and Aarhus, but we don't really get around that much.
Rune: It's hard in the smaller towns. I come from a small town, where it is almost impossible to set up a show that people will attend. I used to book for a small club in my hometown where we would, if we were lucky, have like 30 paying guests. That was it! So we would have these intimate rehearsal space concerts, where we would invite our friends and just play and drink through the night. Good times, but not a good place to host a punk concert.

MRR: You have just released two LPs on US label Mass Media Records. I know you have worked with US labels before with other bands, so you have had some experience. How well does it work, having a record released in the US when you are in Denmark? Does it indicate a willingness to visit the States?
Patrick: We'd love to do a US tour at some point! Mass Media Records in California are really active and supportive of the bands they release. They keep it DIY. And they've put out some of the most interesting bands in the goth-punk/anarcho/wave resurgence we seem to be having these days. We are proud to be part of the Mass Media family! Our album is also out in a Euro pressing on Swedish label Peter Out Records run by DJ Sir Henrik.

Up until the American release of our album, we'd put out the records ourselves: printing, cutting, folding, stenciling, the whole nine yards. But shipping costs made it close to impossible for us to send records abroad without actually losing money per sold copy. We will still be doing records in our apartments but with Mass Media we are able to cater to a much larger audience without losing money or having people pay way more than we'd feel comfortable with for a punk rock vinyl.
Rune: We would more than love to go to the states. Denmark is a really small country, so we pretty much only play in Copenhagen. Soon, we are planning on going on a tour around Europe. We have contacts in Spain, Germany, France, etc. that want to have us over, so it's really just a matter of time. However, right now, we are taking a break from playing live to write and record our next album.

MRR: Since Denmark is so small, as you mention, is it difficult to sell records there? Does it encourage smaller pressings?
Rune: Selling records is surprisingly easy. Well, okay, it's easy because we only produce 200 per pressing, so it's not that much of an accomplishment. Also, we don't want a lot of records piling up in our small apartments. So, no, it's not too much of a hassle! The only thing that sucks is that there is a rather annoying tendency that a lot of people don't want to pay what the records cost to produce. The first record we did, we lost money on each record. I even had a guy trying to haggle down the price on a bunch of our records. Even after I explained that we didn't make any money as it was, he was still going at it. Prick! People also tend to complain when there are only two tracks on a 7", even when I explain that cramming a record with tracks fucks up the sound. But we get by, so I can't really complain in the long run.

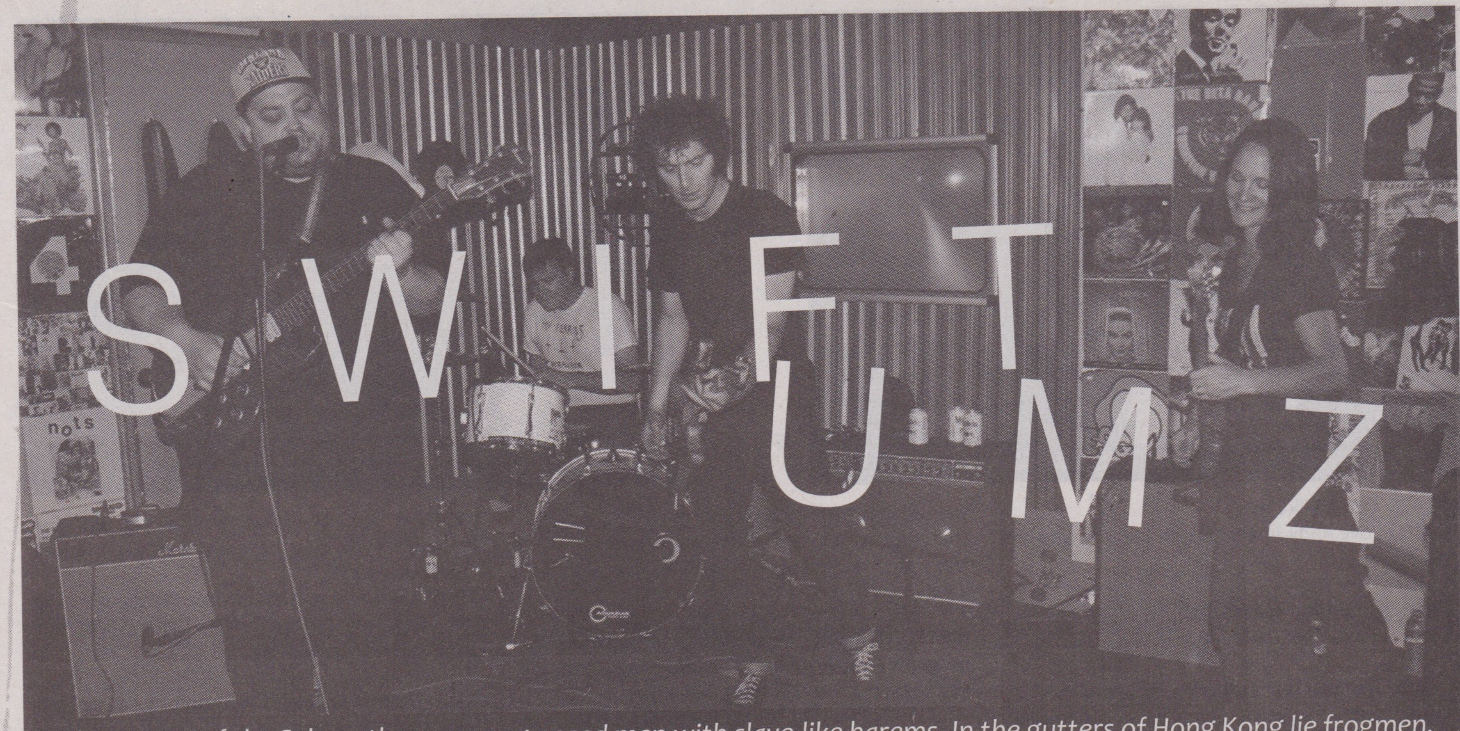
MRR: Are there record stores that support this stuff? I know about Tommas' Repo Man Records, but what else is there? And how is the record distro scene? You know, the little guys.
Rune: Repo Man is a great asset to Copenhagen! Great place! Other than that, there are a few good shops. Æter, for example, is cool. It's a small shop run by our friend Mikkel. Most of the records I sell through my label Elektriske Plader.

MRR: If you could pick a soundtrack to add Moth to, what would the movie be?
Patrick: I think we would do well in some '80s post-apocalyptic sci-fi movie, like *Mad Max*.
Rune: Maybe *Escape from New York*?

MRR: A step further, would Moth be better represented on the silver screen in the flesh or as cartoon characters?
Patrick: We would probably be real live people, maybe some sort of cool-ass, mute, neon-lit cyber ghosts.
Rune: Maybe some eerie cyber ghosts that don't talk, just stand there looking cool, or maybe zombie androids? Yeah, we wouldn't fit into a goofy movie. None of us are very self-important, but our music is on the more serious note, I think.

Contact the band at dkmoth@gmail.com

MOTH
NERACION SUICIDA



SWIFTUMZ

In the wastes of the Sahara there are pug-nosed men with slave-like harems. In the gutters of Hong Kong lie frogmen, bug-eyed and afraid of the sun. Europe is overrun with the New Jackboot White Man—ugly and vicious, terrors without hair.

But here in beautiful California, up in sunny San Francisco, we've got Chris McVicker, alias Swifty, and with him comes a band called Swiftumz. Good old Swifty! It makes you feel good to see him, it really does. I was once at a party over in the nature museum we got in the big park here, wandering around all alone looking at fish in the aquarium. Who do I see, sitting stoned and amazed but Swifty himself, gazing in rapt wonder at a bunch of fucking fish swimming around. The man's good. The band is great. Sure, it's his solo project, but it's not like he's fucking Jay Reatard farting around alone in a closet. He's a sociable, amiable fellow, so much so that the title of his new record—Everybody Loves Chris, out now on Melters Records—is to be taken absolutely at face value. He's a fucking pleasure. We had this conversation over drinks at a bar on 16th Street with Hammy (the drummer for the band) and Matt Roberts (a licensed psychologist I enlisted to help me understand McVicker). The interview ends with Hammy, who had been asleep facedown on the table, waking up and vomiting into an empty tray.

Interview and introduction by Brace Belden. Photos provided by Anne Cook (courtesy of PressureDrop) and Michael Tesi.

BRACE: So what, you two assholes from the same town?
CHRIS: Yes.

BRACE: What town?
CHRIS: Benicia.
HAMMY: I, uh, moved there in Middle School… it's an oddball place. Original capital of California.

BRACE: What? Wow. Can't understand why they would have switched them.
HAMMY: It's a peninsula town. As such, the buildings have, uh… the restaurants all used to be brothels, and the architecture reflects that.
CHRIS: There's a trashy side of town and like a not trashy side of town.

BRACE: What side you guys grow up on?
BOTH: Both.
CHRIS: Hammy grew up in between. He grew up in Vallejo before that, which is pure trash. I grew up half on the trashy side and half on the not-trashy side.

MATT: You guys play in bands before this?
CHRIS: Little bit. We always made music together but not in a band. We made a rap album in high school.
MATT: What was that called?
CHRIS: *Cool Breeze & the Fervor.*

BRACE: Sounds like a great record.
CHRIS: No one's ever going to hear that.

BRACE: Are the tracks still in existence?
CHRIS: I have the files "on my cloud," but you gotta be real special to hear those. Hammy should be proud of it because he just like, played instruments on it, but I like, rapped on it, so it's pretty embarrassing. But I'm not actually that bad.

BRACE: I tend to associate you with rap.
CHRIS: That's what I'm going for.

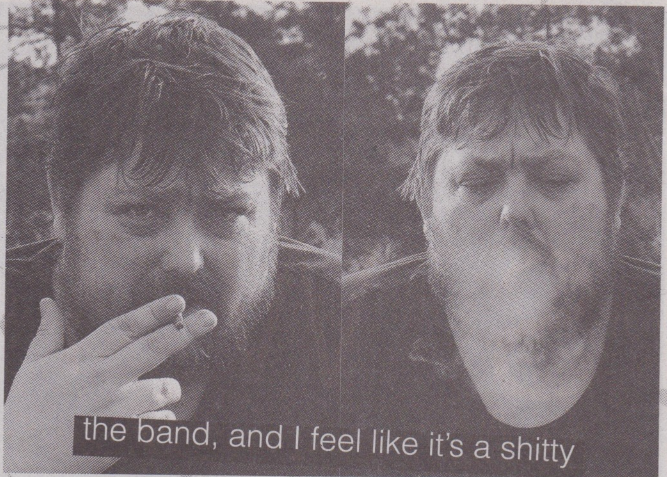
BRACE: I guess it's mostly in your hats. Was that your milieu before?
CHRIS: I tried to be punk through maybe like, twelfth grade or something, I don't think it was really working.

MATT: So you, you, ah, you're done some rap, you've done some pop. When did you start writing pop songs?
CHRIS: Well, I started writing songs for Seth from Hunx & His Punx.

BRACE: Didn't you write the first single or something?
CHRIS: Yeah… yeah… then also at the same time like, every band, I felt like I could do a better job than any of these bands. Even though maybe I'm not the most talented person in the world like. I just felt like I could express myself at that level and do a better job, head and shoulders above any pop band I'm seeing. You know it's kind of competitive for me, there's all these dudes dressed like Rod Stewart running around in the early '00s and late '90s just playin' in shitty bands.

BRACE: Like the Cuts?
CHRIS: I hated them and now I love them.

“The way I do my songs is I bring them to


the band, and I feel like it’s a shitty

BRACE: Good, I like them.
CHRIS: I love Andy Jordan. I really identify with him right now.

BRACE: Could you repeat that?
CHRIS: I love Andy Jordan.

BRACE: And you really identify with him?
CHRIS: Yeah, we get along really well, I think like, like I don’t know what happened to him, like he got kicked in the head by a horse or something, I don’t know, yeah, great guy. I just felt like all these slick, wannabe David Bowies… I’m more like a mean guy. I just wear sloppy t-shirts and play good songs, you know?

MATT: I see a bit of Ween in there, but I never thought about it until just now.
CHRIS: I like Ween, just not the jokey songs. Like the heartfelt good songs.

BRACE: To this day, I cannot help but associate Ween with—and I know they didn’t do this song—but with the theme from *South Park*.
CHRIS: Oh, is that them?

BRACE: No, that’s Primus.
CHRIS: Oh geez, I seen Primus play when I was a kid, Hammy too, so many times. Hammy’s seen every show. He saw Faith No More play with Chuck Mosley. He went to like Day on the Green when he was like ten. Growing up in the Bay, saw Primus a lot, Melvins opening up for Primus a lot. Fucking Green Day, a ton. Jawbreaker a ton. Love Green Day, first time I ever heard Green Day I was laying in the back of my friend’s station wagon and lost my mind. It was the best music I ever heard.
HAMMY: I think we lucked out by being in the area that we were in.
CHRIS: Honestly, Benicia is kinda isolated. Everyone listened to shoegaze and gangster rap.

MATT: People were into shoegaze in Benicia?
CHRIS: Oh, fuck yeah. First time I took acid I listened to Ride.
HAMMY: Stuck-up punk rockers were. They weren’t that stuck-up really. There was a select amount of people in our high school that had an agenda to push what they liked, and that’s, like, what it was. Only if you listened to “120 Minutes” would you know to listen to this music, otherwise it’d be somebody in your classroom.
CHRIS: My brother is like really serious about jazz, so I even know like shitty ’80s jazz like Spiro Gyra, the Yellowjackets, shit that like. It’s not even on the radar anymore. Quincy Jones, Stevie Wonder, that was my parents’ drunk music when I was a kid. I got everything Quincy Jones ever did. He’s a genius.

MATT: I’m a little older than you, but the punk people certainly weren’t listening to shoegaze stuff when I was growing up. When I listen to your music I feel like it’s kind of, shoegaze but also like the good side of pop punk.
CHRIS: I think it’s like, inherently punk just cause I’m, like, so shitty at playing guitar, like, there’s always gonna be a little bit of “lo-fi” going on there. I can’t just be the singer, I have to play guitar. I don’t know. I don’t know. I also like pop punk to an extent. The way I do my songs is I bring them to the band, and I feel like it’s a shitty pop punk song and we try and make it different. “Can you make it sound cool?”

MATT: Maybe all songs start out pop punk.
CHRIS: Same three chords for everything.

BRACE: Pop is good, punk is good. But I don’t like pop punk.
MATT: It gets a bad name.
CHRIS: Fuckin’ Ramones are pop punk.

BRACE: I just don’t think, I don’t think… growing up how I grew up, I don’t think I’m equipped to appreciate it like you guys are.
CHRIS: I’m really happy that I missed spinkick hardcore. Hammy is like a hardcore punk, though. He drummed for the Fleshies for years. They played like 300 out of 365 days or whatever. While people were like, flunking out of college or working, Hammy was touring with the shittiest bands in the world, and then having to take Greyhound home and get in fights, you know. Everything this comes from is seriously, like, the Spam Records scene in the early-2000s, which is *not* cool to say but those are the only people I can trust that’ll play music with me.
HAMMY: When I called someone and was like “How do I get more shows, I don’t get it,” the first guy was John Mink from Spam Records, and, ah, that’s how Fleshies started. But even before that what’s worth mentioning is that Buzz-o and the Headstones, that was just a bunch of brothers who somehow comingled with a lot of great musicians. They would have shows at cafes. So I would see shows at cafes that were mindblowing, I wouldn’t understand. I wouldn’t understand how a band playing half originals, half Who covers playing at a cafe at 5:00 p.m. was mindblowing to me. I didn’t get it but I liked it and was interested in it.

BRACE: I feel like that was a big era for skinheads—you guys have any bad experiences with skinheads?
CHRIS: I only went and saw like Jawbreaker and Green Day, sometimes a random Gilman night, but I never saw anything scary.

MATT: That was a real thing right before I started going to punk shows. I’m a couple of years older than you, and it was like always in the air.
CHRIS: I was always really confused because there’s like cool skinheads, like reggae guys, and like, oh there’s really cool black ones, and cool white ones, and dumb ones, and then dumb ones who wanna fight for the right reasons and dumb ones who wanna fight for the wrong ones…

MATT: It’s too confusing!
CHRIS: It’s too confusing. When you see a skinhead you gotta go up and just ask them.

BRACE: Like ask if they’re one of the bad ones.
CHRIS: If I were a skinhead I’d be a really good skinhead.

BRACE: Like really good at being a skinhead?
MATT: If I was a skinhead I would have some kind of clearly demarcated thing that says what kind of skinhead I am.
HAMMY: God. What about straightedge shows? You ever been to those?

BRACE: God.
MATT: Do you think there’re a lot of Swiftumz fans that’re interested in skinhead culture?
CHRIS: Probably not. But it’s for *MRR*.

BRACE: Straightedge is fucking insane.
HAMMY: These people created a militant culture that at some point didn’t have to do with hate, so I wanna comprehend what they’re saying.

MATT: You mean straightedge?
HAMMY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. *[drunk]* That’s a long time ago… I played shows… Arizona… ’90s… that was the thing. People’d have dances worked out, no drugs, no racism, no violence.
CHRIS: And no girls there.
[laughter]
CHRIS: I started off more… DJing parties. I always played music, though, never too seriously. Play some funk, have some girls dancing. Hammy would be off doing punk stuff, I’d be working, going to bars, regular guy.

pop punk song and we try to make it

different. 'Can you make it sound cool?'"

MATT: You ever think you'd throw in a rhyme onto a Swiftumz record?
CHRIS: It'd have to be the right thing. I would put a fucking rap song on a record, no problem, but it's just like… it's so passé. Anybody can rap and make it sound good these days. I'm kind of a snob so I don't wanna do it, because I'm not good enough. I could probably make one song at this point that'd be good enough but I cant just write some lyrics and, you know. Now it's all just about some kind of swagger, bullshit you know? The rap album's not coming anytime soon.

BRACE: You don't have to do an album, you could do like that one 7 Seconds song where he starts rapping in it…
CHRIS: I could kill that. It'd be a real rap song if I did it. I don't have the confidence, honestly, right now. Plus, you know, I'm trying to make some good pop songs first.

MATT: How did writing the song for Hunx happen? How did Seth know that you'd be the guy?
CHRIS: He just asked me. We're best friends, we got each others initials tattooed on our wrists, and he's just like, give me a song and I said "OK, I got one for you." I did two for him.

MATT: Was that the first time you wrote a song that wasn't rap?
CHRIS: No, me and Hammy were in a band called Bike Fight that never went anywhere.

MATT: You played shows and stuff? I never knew about that.
CHRIS: We toured. I was in a band called Special Ed. We were trying to make a fake garage band but people just loved it. They didn't understand…and I wrote some good more hardcore punk songs; hardcore in my sense which was like Black Flag or Circle Jerks or Vom. That's what I think of when I think of hardcore. Like I wrote those kinds of songs for that and Bike Fight.

MATT: It was kind of goofy though… you guys all had propeller hats.
CHRIS: A lot of yelling… Bike Fight was a little different, we'd get psychedelic and kind of have no rules. Basically, I quit. I just wanted everything to quiet down so I could sing, and then I got a record deal and basically ended up with the same people.
BRACE: A record deal?
CHRIS: A record deal meaning he put out our record.

MATT: Did you record the first Swiftumz album with a band or did you do it by yourself?
CHRIS: Everyone did it. Some people did it electronically, Hammy recorded the songs, my friend Chris Guthridge is on it. Any time there's a really good, intricate guitar part of a Swiftumz song it's *not me* playing. It's somebody else. Everyone thinks that's me, but it never is.

BRACE: Wait, Hammy, what do you play?
CHRIS: Hammy plays drums and lead guitar.

MATT: You were the guitar player for a while, right?
HAMMY: Yeah but I play the drums right. I love to play drums. *[drunk]* I, I… love playing drums.
CHRIS: He would be the real guitar player but I don't know anyone else that play drums, either… there's just like no rules, man, like you don't have to have this band, people move in and out. Especially recordings. Who can play it the best? Who's got the best idea right now? That's who should be on the record.

MATT: It's been like ten people at this point, right?
CHRIS: More than that.
HAMMY: Yeah but some are like… Marie is very consistent.
CHRIS: Marie and Hammy have been in the live band since the very beginning. We've played with just me and Hammy sometimes. I've played by myself before, which I have to get really drunk to do.

BRACE: What is your relationship with your folks like?
CHRIS: Uh… I'm really close with my mom, and then we make fun of my dad and he gets upset a lot.
HAMMY: My parents are passed away. Um, but, I mean, I don't know what to say about them.
CHRIS: My parents are like poor, they live in Benicia but they're like poor, my sister lives in their house with her two kids, like, I almost feel like I need to get another job and start sending them money or move back with them so they can like, eat, at this point. My dad's old, my mom's old and, uh, they got two kids… my sister works but you know she's like me with her money, which is just like… *lemme tell ya…* irresponsible. You know, they love me. We get along really well.

BRACE: Maybe that's why you never became more punk.
CHRIS: They're still together. But, you know, they hate each other. But in a normal old person way.
HAMMY: I love Chris' parents. They love me. At several points, I lived at his house. His parents are nice people.
CHRIS: Yeah, they're good people.
HAMMY: Nice people… they're very sarcastic. Good people.

MATT: I mean, Chris is known for being the funniest person in the world, so it had to come from somewhere.
BRACE: You are funny, but there is a darkness…
CHRIS: Yeah…

MATT: There's a darkness.
CHRIS: Especially when I'm alone. It's because I'm all alone.
HAMMY: Thing… thing… thing with Chris is that his dad, his upbringing, they have a lot of academic, musical knowledge in that household. His dad has a degree from UC Berkeley. His mother played saxophone in high school and college and the military.
CHRIS: Yeah my family has a huge musical background, like my dad can play any musical instrument. There's only like two people left that can actually repair musical instruments in the Bay Area, and he's one of them and he can't find anyone that is smart enough for him to teach how to do it. There's not enough time to do it because he has so much work and also he's severely underpaid. He repairs musical instruments, for a living, in retirement, you know. When I was a kid he was an engineer, and at night would repair musical instruments for the same company.

BRACE: What do they think of your music?
CHRIS: Oh they like it. My dad played on my album. My brother doesn't get anything besides like… he saw us play, he said it was good. My brother, he's like this huge only-jazz, very snobby guy, but my dad and mom get it.

MATT: Does your mom play on it, too?
CHRIS: No… my dad played bassoon on the record, though.

BRACE: Do you think they're proud of you?
CHRIS: Eh, sort of. Disappointed and proud at the same time… *[laughter]* They like that I have friends but they hate me because I'm so unhealthy… and never finished school or anything. I've been kind of

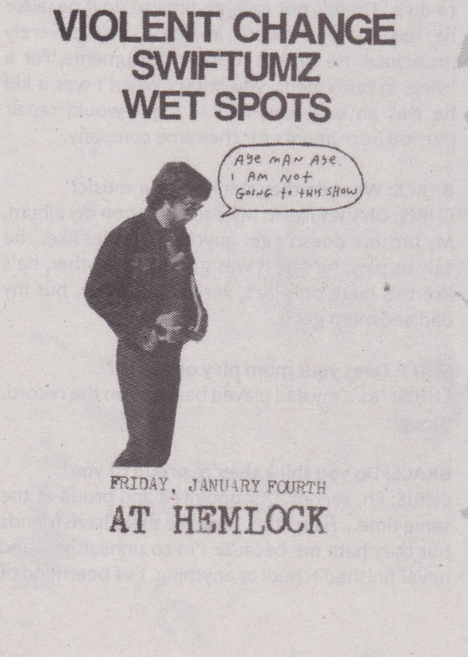
treading water here in SF for a little while. They're basically pretty happy with me, like I don't ask them for anything but they're gonna get it soon. I live paycheck to paycheck, so eventually I'm gonna have to move back into the garage. I don't know. At some point, I feel like I might have to ask them for something again. I hope not, but…

BRACE: That's what you figure's going to happen?
CHRIS: No… what I'd like to do is make enough money to give them some money, or something… you know? To live off. But I don't see that happening.

MATT: Sell your music to a car commercial.
HAMMY: I gotta say… I can't really… I would really… kick myself if I didn't mention that the oddball thing with Chris and I is that, my dad really liked Chris…
CHRIS: I was always very insecure and super depressed. Way worse when I was a kid than now. Hammy's dad taught me that I needed to develop an ego, and stuff, with his weird Buddhist lingo. It actually really helped me, he taught some things that are responsible for my personality now. You know, at least I'm not a total wimp or anything.
HAMMY: No… no… no… no. Basically he would look at this human being and be like, you need to get—I'll have another—you need to get into yourself. You're a person, you need to get into it. The funny thing was that Chris' dad, someone gave me a Beatles shirt… they, ah, a *Rubber Soul* shirt, and Chris' dad… I showed up at his house one day, and his dad was like "Nice shirt." He was a big Beatles fan.

BRACE: So what don't you like about yourself?
CHRIS: *[laughs]* Um… what don't I like about myself… I mean… Jesus Christ. What don't I like about myself…
HAMMY: What?
CHRIS: What don't I like about myself? I hate how lazy I am.

BRACE: Sloth is one of the seven deadly sins.
CHRIS: I hate how much of a flake I am. But that's, like, fun, but seriously I will like, make an excuse for anything. I hate that I can't stop drinking once I start. What else do I hate about myself? I like my personality. I like my sense of humor…. mostly just laziness and not a lot of willpower when the booze starts rolling, you know what I mean? It's not ruining my life… well, it kind of is.



BRACE: What is ruining your life?
CHRIS: Lack of energy. Being in my late thirties and probably being in pretty bad health, not taking care of it. I tell my friends and my family that I need help and it hasn't really cashed out so far.

BRACE: How do you mean?
CHRIS: I feel like as far as managing money and being active and eating right, I have no control over myself. It's almost like, I almost wished I was in a halfway house for something. Some kind of Hollywood fucking celebrity retreat, or something.

MATT: Do you binge?
CHRIS: Absolutely. If I don't go out, you know, I'm not getting drunk, I'm not spending money. I'll order food… I try not to go to the corner store every day on my way home and buy chips or something, but even that's impossible. So I wish I could have some kind of… I could do it myself, too, I guess.

BRACE: It's hard to do that kind of stuff yourself.
CHRIS: I hope to, eventually… the only thing I can do is move back in with my folks.

BRACE: You really think that's the only solution?
CHRIS: Yeah, probably at this point. I feel like I need like a coach or something.

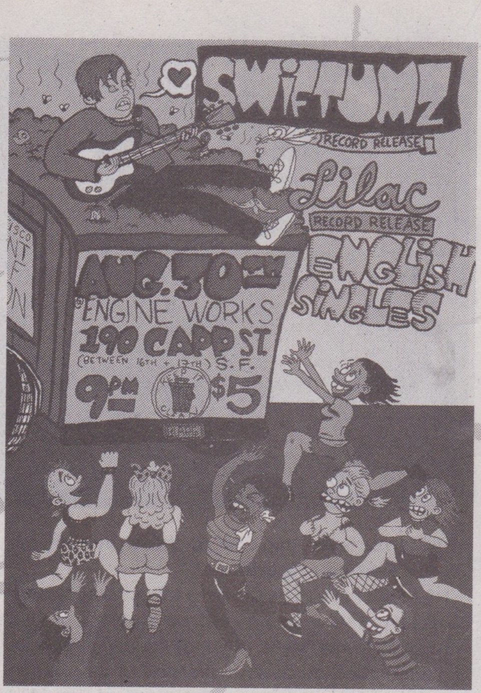
MATT: There're people that do that.
CHRIS: At the same time, I'm better off than a lot of people. I'm somehow managing at this point.

MATT: Well, I also gotta say, you're making shit, you're doing shit. You're not doing nothing. You're being interviewed because you make music that people like…
CHRIS: You know, making this album, I kept thinking that if I had more energy to put into it, how much better it would be.

BRACE: Well, that's a common thing to think when you're making something.
MATT: I think a lot of the best art is made by people who don't have confidence that what they made is good.
CHRIS: At the same time, the album is the result of how I was feeling over the past two years. The sound reflects that. Maybe it's not what I want, but it seems like people like it. I think it's okay. I wish I could work faster, as an artist, make more songs, but I don't have the energy. I just try and go to work every day, and a lot of that is just dozing off until it's to go to bed. I have sleep apnea. I need to buy a new machine for it. I need money for that. That's actually a huge thing…

BRACE: You mean one of those masks?
CHRIS: Yeah. It makes the whole difference in my whole life. Send money! Get me a new sleep apnea machine.

BRACE: What happened to the other one?
CHRIS: It stopped working… it's bulky. I don't have money to buy a new one right now, because I have cable! And new shoes! So, actually don't feel sorry for me at all.



BRACE: Well, then tell me more about spending money recklessly.
CHRIS: I don't spend it recklessly. I get paid, the weekend's over, I look and see I have like thirty dollars. What the fuck happened? In reality, I have such cheap rent living here in the city, I could save money, I could hire a personal life coach or something.

MATT: I've had a life coach. This isn't about me, but it's coming up. I've had one before.
CHRIS: You're going to school to *be* a life coach!

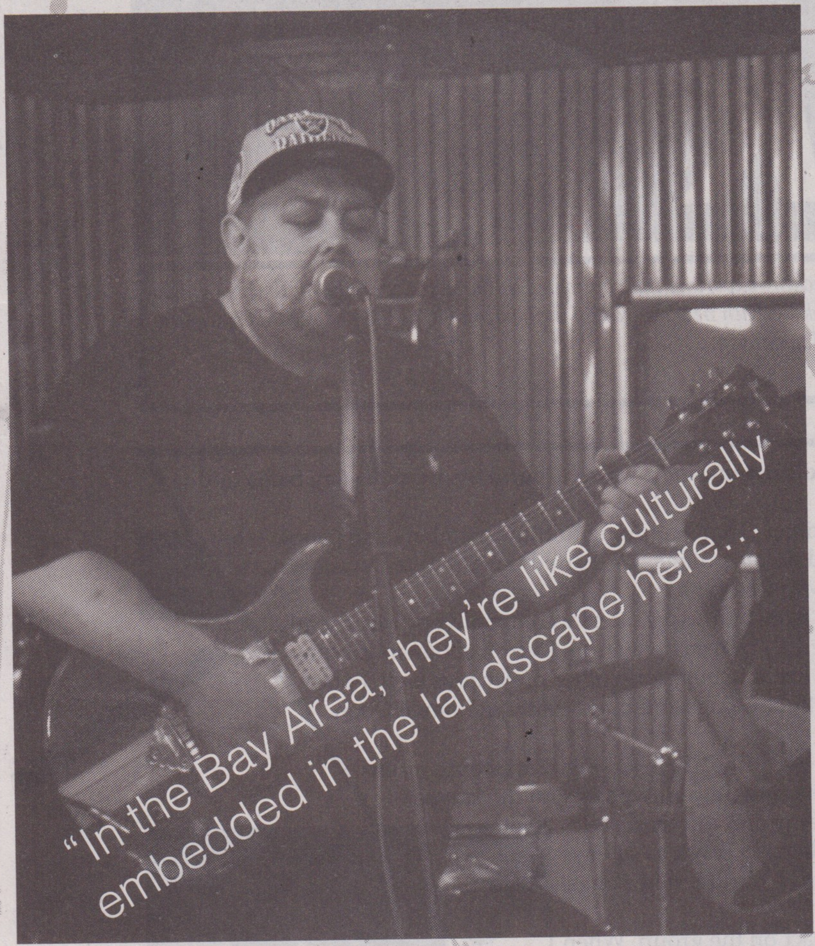
MATT: No… no, life coaches make more money than what I'm going to be.
CHRIS: The only reason that I love Matt Roberts is that he gives good advice to a friend, you know?

BRACE: Who've you loved the most? In your whole life?
CHRIS: I was in love with two different girls that I wrote my first album around. They're pretty much tied. Except one actually went out with me for a while, so probably she wins… oh, no, maybe the other one wins. One of them went out with me and left, the other one laughed at me like it was a joke, pretty much.

BRACE: What, that you wrote the album about her?
CHRIS: The album came after that, after I expressed my feelings for her. It didn't work out at all.

BRACE: That's tough to do.
CHRIS: I got an album out of it. I remember she showed up at one of my shows with a new boyfriend. I couldn't even handle it. I mean, it's fine, but like… and there's nothing since then.

BRACE: Do you think that affected the sound of your new album?
CHRIS: There's some shit on there, but it's weird. I felt like I wasn't depressed enough to write enough songs for it. Hammy played on the whole record, man.



"In the Bay Area, they're like culturally embedded in the landscape here… you love music, you're eventually going to end up loving the Grateful Dead…I fucking love Mac Dre for the same reason, or Sly and the Family Stone."

BRACE: Yeah, Hammy, let's talk about you for a little bit. What was the worst thing to ever happen to you?
HAMMY: Oh man. Oh. My addiction to heroin was difficult. No, nothing was difficult. We just… we… we finished up, the record, and we did it in, in, in the capacity we could do it in. That's it. That's really it. We, ah…

MATT: I think he asked you what was the worst thing that happened to you *ever*.
BRACE: Like in your life.
HAMMY: Oh, no, it's not even appropriate for *Maximum Rocknroll*. My mom's boyfriend talking to me about masturbation, me explaining to him that it wasn't gonna work out, and that we were gonna have to stop talking. Like… like… like let me say this. This is like, I love that Swiftumz has the second album coming out, it's great, but I feel like the conversation can be teenybopper and fine, but the reality is that Chris and I are best friends. There are a lot of dark things that led up to us being friends. Like, I had to tell a heroin addict, "You're not my dad, you have to leave me alone." Leading up to it! This is like two years before this was my friend *[pointing to Swifty]*. He grew up in Benicia, I grew up in Vallejo and moved around and wound up in Benicia. We basically wound up at the same high school… and, you know… I think he is a very resilient person, as am I, and that's why we're here having completed a second album, basically.

BRACE: Is it easy to work with somebody you've known for so long?
HAMMY: Yeah… like, take commerce and money. A lot of it is very basic. Alight, we have a place to play music this day, we can get a twelve pack, get this done.
CHRIS: We're never out of weed.
HAMMY: Yeah! A lot of this shit is just… basic, you know?
CHRIS: Hammy, talk about the Spits for a minute.
HAMMY: Well, I would point out that that was a good run.

MATT: The Spits?
BRACE: Were you in the Spits?
HAMMY: No, no, no… What Chris is talking about is there was a year where Dead Moon and the Spits were playing like, often. And it was great. That's it, there's nothing else to say.
CHRIS: We drove to Portland in like the worst rainstorm in a century and saw Dead Moon's "last" show. New Year's Eve in Portland, they played for so long, I left after an hour and a half, went to other bars and stuff, came back and they were *still* playing. Chris (another Chris) had fallen asleep…
HAMMY: Do you like Faith No More…?

BRACE: I don't like Dead Moon.
CHRIS: Speaking of dead… lets talk about the Dead.

BRACE: Let's. Who's your favorite member?
CHRIS: Jerry. Oh no, Bob… Bob. No. Bill. Bill. Yeah, Bill. Bill, then Jerry.

BRACE: Tell people where to start.
CHRIS: Eh… tell a punk where to start with the Grateful Dead? Listen to live shows… '72, or like, if you're punk listen to the freakout '67/'68/'69 shit, where it's a little more rock'n'roll… I just feel like growing up in the Bay Area, they're like culturally imbedded in the landscape here, and it's like, if you love music you're eventually going to end up loving the Grateful Dead. If you're from here, especially. It's very Bay Area music. You know, as hard as it gets. I fucking love Mac Dre for the same reason or Sly and the Family Stone. And Sly and the Family Stone were the best band ever, too. I probably like them more than the Grateful Dead. Bill Buckner from Vallejo, you know… anyways, I just think at some point I got old and was listening to them and like, they have a lot of things they did… letting fans record their music. As far as music technology goes, they built great sound systems, like my favorite reggae artist did at the same time.

BRACE: Who's your favorite reggae artist?
CHRIS: Fucking Bob Marley, dude. Of course there's a million other people, but come on, man. Duh. Who's my favorite folk artist? Bob Dylan, dude. You know, like… at the same time they did a lot of cool shit. I feel like it's ingrained… if you ever go to Jerry Day or something, or watch the Bob Weir documentary. The Real Deadheads are the ones that enjoyed the music, you know, not necessarily this fucked-up culture that's really horrible.

BRACE: The Whip-It Mafia.
MATT: The Whip-It Mafia?
BRACE: They hang out at Dead shows, have a big thing of nitrous, and sell you whip-its but if you do that too, they'll beat you.
HAMMY: I went to a Dead show just to get drugs, when I was in high school. I went to the Oakland Coliseum.

BRACE: Which drugs?
HAMMY: Oh… whatever they had. Mostly like acid.
CHRIS: They have a lot of amazing music. They can get corny sometimes, but they keep it real, man. I don't know. When they're on, they don't miss a note. Great musicians. Our guitar player right now, Barker, never plays the same thing twice. It's good 90% of the time. When it's not, I'll deal with it. The guy just starts fucking playing stuff, he has a good mind for it.
HAMMY: It's tough because… a lot of the people that we deal with, it's not about virtuosity. A lot of it is having common sense about…

BRACE: About being a groove merchant.
CHRIS: We're definitely groove merchants… Shout out to Groove Merchants [record store on Haight]. Oh shit, the Beastie Boys already did that though!

BRACE: Who did *they* shout out?
CHRIS: "Shout out my man Groove Merchants…." Also, Beastie Boys are the fucking best band ever. Green Day, Teenage Fanclub, Jesus and Mary Chain… not Green Day, though.
[Hammy has passed out on the table.]

BRACE: Why are you called Swifty?
CHRIS: It was my rap name when I was a rapper, back when I was a teenager. First I was Cool Breeze, then I was Big Swifty, which, to make it worse, is taken from the name of a Frank Zappa song off of *Waka/Jawaka* called "Big Swifty".

BRACE: I guess that's your "rock name" now.
CHRIS: It's Swiftumz.
BRACE: What's your best rap couplet?
CHRIS: *[raps]* "M to the C to the capital V-i-c-k-e-r/ hey, that's me". That's good, right?
[Hammy wakes up, vomits onto the table, interview ends.]

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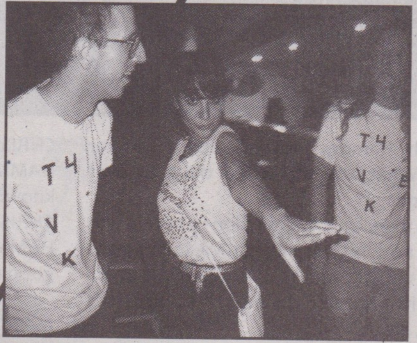
TYVEK

Tyvek is easy to take for granted, a seeming endless supply of rollicking experimental pop rooted in the fertile wildness of the post-punk experiment of endless adventure through mistakes and classic hooks... With new records on the horizon via In the Red records it seemed like a good time to catch up with Kevin Boyer and see what was happening.
Interview by Dave Hyde and Layla Gibbon

How many people have played in Tyvek? Is the lineup contingent upon who's around on a day-to-day basis or do you dream of having a stable group?
I think twenty-two people have played in Tyvek at various times. That's counting fulltime members and people who have filled in for tours, jammed with us at shows, or played on recordings. We started the group ten years ago, so it would take up more space than we have here to tell the whole story.

We're a stable group now. Matt's on drums, Bobby plays bass, and we're often accompanied by our friends. It's a great unit, but at the moment we have a lot of work to do. I moved away from Detroit about six months ago, so Tyvek songs have been piling up. But we've all been keeping busy with other projects, as well. I play in the Intended. Matt fronts Mountains and Rainbows, and Bobby sings and plays guitar in Bonnie Doon.

How has a rotating cast of players affected the music? Do you simplify knowing that people might have to learn a set on the fly? Does it keep things vibrant having new viewpoints on the songs?
It's always been positive having new people bring fresh energy and different styles into the group, but I wouldn't call it a rotating cast of players. Tyvek is always changing. Regardless of how stable the lineup is, we're always starting new songs, messing around with old songs, trying things out, etc.



Each person brings their own style and has a unique impact on the group. When the lineup changes, there's always a period of relearning, half-retracing our steps, but we always find ourselves in a different place from where we left off. The sound changes, and sometimes we react to that by making changes to the songs. Learning together as a band has always involved a lot of repetition, which I think has allowed variations to unfold naturally over time. But we've never simplified. Some of the songs are pretty simple to begin with, but many of them have weird subtle tics that often go unnoticed but are the key to the song. To simplify something like that would kill the spirit of the song.

Any plans for The Tyvek All Stars, every member past and present on stage at once?
No, not at the moment! We've had shows with six, seven, eight people playing. Last summer we did a show with two drummers, two bass players, and two guitarists (including myself). Just imagining everyone assembled in the same room... It boggles the mind. I think taking the stage would be a waste of time—we could take over Michigan!

How'd you come to the prolific taping/releasing? Do you tape everything (every show, every practice) and how do you decide what to release? It's pretty amazing that you are willing to expose so much of the band including some bits that others typically hide.
I generally always record practice. It's part of the songwriting process. I don't record all of the shows, but I get most of them. I don't tape practices or shows for the purpose of collecting fresh material to release. We just find it's good to have a reference.

Sometimes when the material is new and we're playing loose we get lucky and instruments and vocals click in a way that would be impossible to recreate, or when there's a shake up and things like atmosphere or equipment change, a live set or a basement recording might have a rare ephemeral quality that reveals something new. When that's the case, we might put it out. Or not... It depends on a lot of things.

For the most part, these releases aren't really documentary-style, "fly on the wall" type scenarios. For every C20 that gets released, there are hours and hours of recordings left unused. We release a tape because we think it stands up to repeated listens and we want people to hear it, not necessarily because

it's representative or provides a behind the scenes glimpse of the songwriting process. Most importantly, it's fun to do it, and we hope that comes through loud and clear. Anyone interested in Tyvek tapes should get in touch with me at kevinboyer@gmail.com.

It's fascinating to step back and see a how any given song can appear across the discography with scaling fidelities, from low-budget tape dupes of practice to sharp sounding studio material. With added synth and three guitars or as a stripped down trio, etc. It's fun to listen to as a fan, but I wonder if it is utilitarian for you? Are you in search of the perfect version of a song? Pressure testing to measure the durability of a tune?
We're just enthused about what we're doing. Thankfully, we've never stopped getting excited about practicing, playing live, and making recordings. With that as the starting point, it's pretty hard for me to imagine not exploring the material, pushing the boundaries of the songs to come up with new and hopefully better versions. Also, when the lineup changes, it's always interesting to note how the change registers in the individual songs. And sometimes it's refreshing to get back basics, back to the very first arrangement of a song.

The constant throughout these recurring changes is that it's always a matter of adjusting (or not adjusting) the delivery, arrangement, instrumentation, etc. in order to keep the original idea of the song in sight. With that in mind, we're free to do whatever we want.

Have you hit perfection yet? What is the perfectly recorded Tyvek track?
It's hard for me to think of a recording as perfect. Most of the time I notice things that I would like to go back and "fix." There are, however, some songs that seem above the psychological fray of second guessing: "Needle Drops" from our double 7", "Sidewalk" from the EP of the same name, "Blocks" from the *Nothing Fits* LP, and "Robots, Dogs" from the *Blunt Instrumental* EP. Those recordings were all made under very different circumstances, but I think they turned out quite well.

Were there ever any serious troubles with the band name (cease & desist, etc.)? For a while it seemed like I'd see spelling variations but I haven't noticed that much lately.
At some point in 2008, MySpace shut down our site due to a complaint from a third party. We contacted the legal department of this third party, and they told us everything would be fine if we changed the spelling of our name on social media platforms. We did that, and we haven't heard from them since.

Legally, it's black and white. It's first Amendment. We know that, they know that. Unfortunately, we could never out-lawyer them, so it doesn't matter that we're in the right. I'm sure they could successfully take action against us if they wanted to. That specter is always looming overhead.

Detroit seems like a vibrant, diverse, interesting city on the whole as well as in the underground. There are so many great bands doing so many different things (and this is true historically as well as currently). What is it about the city that has proved such fertile ground? Are there things in your life/art where you think, "I wouldn't be able to do this anywhere else?"
As everyone now knows, there are plenty of vacant spaces in Detroit. Obviously, that's great for bands: it's not hard to find a place where you can let it blast. While that aspect of the city is hardly unique, I think one thing that is more personal and specific to Detroit is the geographic extent of the abandonment and social decay. I've never seen a place that resembles it even remotely. So often on tour we hear something like, "Oh, you must feel right at home in (Oakland/ Baltimore/etc.). I bet it's a lot like Detroit!" No. Not at all.

Having grown up in Detroit in the 1980s, the terms "vibrant" and "diverse" don't readily come to mind when I think of my hometown. It was

depressing and gray, hanging on for life. I have, however, always found it interesting. As a kid, one of the most fascinating things for me was the raw cityscape: deteriorating industrial wreckage, the vast swathes of emptiness, and the crumbling topography. One of my favorite things was just riding around in the car and looking out of the window from the backseat. It was entrancing and disturbing. It fired my imagination.

Even at a very young age, when I had only the vaguest understanding of the historical circumstances that had brought about such a surreal and visually striking environment, I had a feeling that it looked the way it did because things had gone very, very wrong. The fact that grown-up Detroiters found the abandonment and decay to go beyond the unsettling—to be downright painful—confirmed the truth in this feeling long before I could comprehend the causes of its decline on an intellectual level.

The fact that only a few miles to the north and west sat a conglomeration of prosperous, picturesque suburbs that were extremely hostile to Detroit and Detroiters, and that denied any connection to the city or its people, made it clear to me that the people living in Detroit and dealing with its problems every day were not the ones behind its desolation and poverty.

That this situation was so distorted and misrepresented in the national and local media added to the frustration. For example, every Devil's Night (October 30th) in the mid 1980s, the world would watch on TV as Detroit burned, and any viewer would think that this yearly conflagration was simple mayhem, maniacs wreaking havoc on their own neighborhoods for fun. In those days, no media outlet that I can recall ever cast suspicion on the owners of the properties, largely landlords living in the suburbs who were collecting huge insurance payouts on already derelict properties every Halloween.

I always knew that the transformation of the place I loved was tragic, and the forces behind it evil, but I still loved the place as it was and for what it was, scarred and empty, disjointed and unreal, utterly unique.

Historically Detroit has been fertile ground for music. I can't really explain that, and I can't think of anything specifically "Detroit" about Tyvek. At the same time, I can't imagine Tyvek happening anywhere else.

I am always curious about how people get into punk/underground DIY music. Tell me how you discovered it! What was your first show/whatever that made you feel like you could do it/be on stage as a participant, etc.?
Seeing punk style got me interested in the music. I thought punks looked amazing, and so I was fascinated by the idea of punk rock before I'd ever heard it. Growing up, I went to a lot of shows (mostly bad), spent most of my paychecks at record stores, read fanzines, traded tapes with people, and searched out the music that inspired me. I started my own fanzine when I was fifteen. Some friends and I formed a band at around the same time. I'd never played a real instrument before, so I volunteered to be the singer. I sent my zine to *MRR*, and, thanks to a three-sentence review, I got S.A.S.E.'s, letters, and zines in the mail from all over. I don't think there was a specific show or anything that made me feel like I could be active in punk/underground music, but I started finding out about local bands that had punk attitude and style in their approach to music: bands that would mess up, not care, argue onstage about how the songs were supposed to be played, tell the crowd to fuck off, etc...

Inexperience seemed like a more of a virtue than a drawback. It kept the music from getting predictable and boring.

When did Tyvek start? Is it always going to exist?
We started playing together in Fall 2004. We played a show late in that year before we had come up with a name. Our first show as Tyvek was in January 2005. The overarching nature of the project is open-ended, but a lot of aspects of it are purposefully left undefined. It could end, or it could go on hiatus. One way for me to think about it is that I'm going to keep doing it as long as I'm writing songs that I consider to be Tyvek songs. There are at least a couple more Tyvek albums in the works.

We had a limited music vocabulary, so we had to make up our own as we went along.

Did you have a specific idea of how you wanted Tyvek to sound before you started it or did it just end up that way? I was thinking about this after listening to a few of your different bands. It seems like your sound is very distinctive no matter what group. Not to say they sound the same at all of course, just that it has a specific feeling to it.
Larry and Matt had never played in a group before, and I had pretty limited experience. They were new to their instruments as well. We knew it was going to be rough, but from the first practice, it sounded like Tyvek.

We had a limited music vocabulary, so we had to make up our own as we went along. As far as my own guitar style goes, I could never play like anyone else, and I don't think my playing could ever sound like something else. When I first started learning guitar, it was to come up with music to go with my lyrics and to figure out the music that I was hearing in my head. I couldn't shift gears and play country or metal: for me, playing a guitar (or any instrument) is challenging enough without trying to learn a different style.

Do you miss playing with other incarnations of Tyvek?
Yeah, I miss all of the different lineups. Every incarnation has its own original vibe, and each one has been special to me for lots of different reasons. If nothing else, Tyvek has been a great opportunity to spend time getting to know my friends even better.

I really like The Intended 45, are there more forthcoming recordings or was that a one off? Does Tyvek have a new record coming out/other plans for the future?
The Intended single was no one off! We have an album recorded that should be out next year on In The Red, and hopefully we'll have some tours in the works. I'm really psyched about future Intended and Tyvek activities. Tyvek has a new album recorded that should be out soon (also on In The Red), and we're compiling a collection of previously unreleased recordings as well.

Maybe just five songs or even records that you are into now/have shaped you as a human/muscian/or whatever criteria you feel like adhering to?
Althea and Donna - Uptown Top Ranking
Desperate Bicycles - Smokescreen
Snatch - I.R.T.
Spirogyra - The Furthest Point
Electric Eels - Agitated

Tyvek Discography 2006-2015

Finding Out About Tyvek CD-R, self-released
"Mary Ellen Claims/Honda" 7", X! Records
"Ability," from split 7" with Cygnus, self-released
Flowers CD-R, self-released
Fast Metabolism, CD-R on What's Your Rupture, LP on M'Lady's/ Water Wing
"Future Junk," from split 7" with Cheveu, S-S Records
Summer Burns 2x7" EP, What's Your Rupture?
"Still Sleep/This One Or That One" 7", What's Your Rupture?
Live 2-16-08 CD-R, self-released
Cauldron Born CD-R, self-released
Sidewalk 7" EP, M'Lady's
Blunt Instrumental, self-released tape, 12" on Night People
Live 8-8-08, self-released tape
"Duck Blinds/Pamphlet" 7", Sub Pop
"Blessed/Summer Things" 7", Les Disques Steak
Tyvek LP/CD, Siltbreeze
Live On Cass(ette) tape, Excite Bike
Blunt Instrumental 2: True To The Game tape, Doubles Tapes
Demos tape, Fag Tapes
Where and When: Rochester, NY 3/3/10 CD-R, Fag Tapes
Where and When: New Haven, CT 3/5/10 CD-R, Fag Tapes
Where and When: Atlanta, GA 3/10/10 CD-R, Fag Tapes
Where and When: Monterrey, MX 3/14/10 CD-R, Fag Tapes
Skyin LP, Excite Bike
Live Cleveland 4/4/10 CD-R, self-released
Live, Demos, Rehearsals, And Screwed tape, Fag Tapes
Poppers tape, Fag Tapes
Live At Third Man LP, Third Man
Nothing Fits LP/CD, In the Red
Live, split tape with Snake Hole, Fag Tapes
Time Change 7" EP, Les Disques Steak
Mutant Love tape, Doubles Tapes
On Triple Beams LP/CD, In The Red
Domestic Five tape, Doubles Tapes
"Life Outside" from split tape with Saturday Looks Good To Me, Life Like - FITS8
KC, KS tape, Doubles Tapes
Blunt Instrumental 3 tape, Doubles Tapes

Comp Appearances:
"Hey Una" from *Goner Fest Five* LP, Goner
"Flashing Lights" from *Shiftless Decay* LP/CD, X!
"Flowers" from *The World's Lousy With Ideas, Volume 8* LP, Almost Ready
"Bicycle Fantasy II" from *Yeti Eight* CD, Yeti Publishing
"Song 1" from *Comp of Narf* tape, Fag Tapes
"4312," "Future Junk," "Nothing Fits," "Stop/Start," "Underwater One" from *Live at the C.A.I.D. 10/08/10* tape, Hermitage Tapes
"Dead Stock" from *Lifers II: Life Blood* tape, Life Like
"Tip To Tail," "Stop/Start," "Say Yeah," "Midwest Basements," "Wayne County Roads," "Underwater One," "Scaling," "Give It Up," "Returns/Little Richard" from *Comp of Narf IV* tape, Fag Tapes

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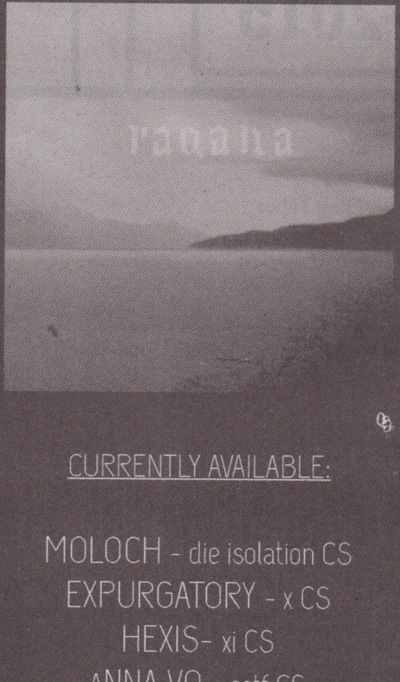

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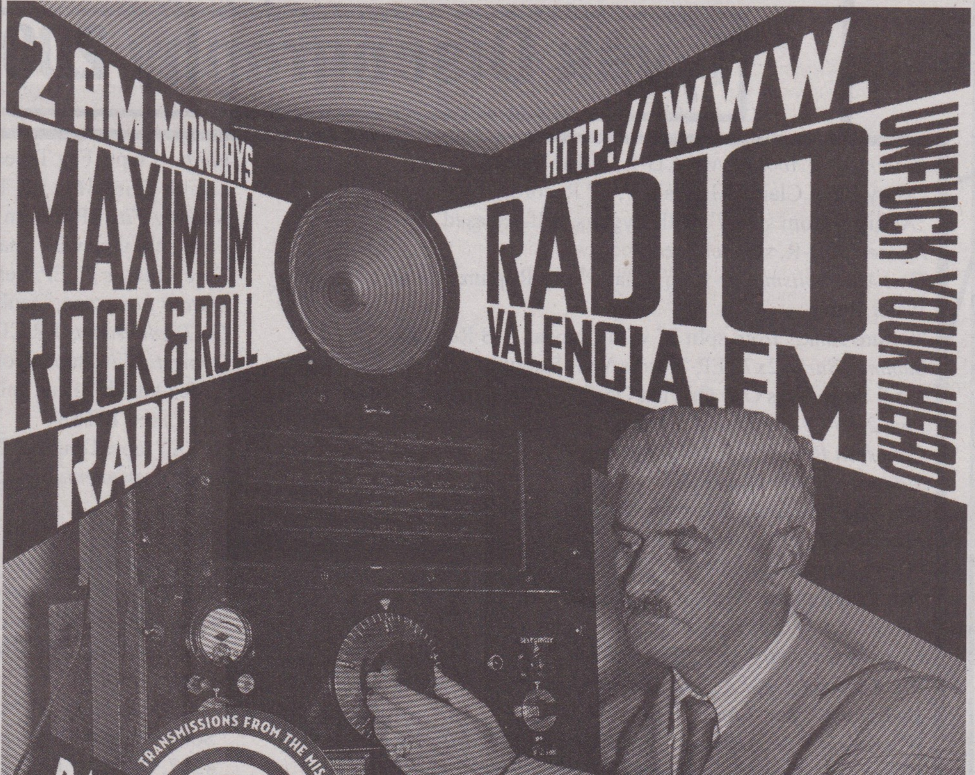
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-RATS BLOOD-

Rats Blood are from Dublin, Ireland. They listen to too much Swedish raw punk but their city is where their noise comes from. They just released an LP, Low Life, this year, and an EP, Punks is Mutants, in 2013.

Interview and introduction by Cormac O'Siochan.
Photos by Lyndsey Putt.

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MRR: Dublin going into 2015: what's punk like there?
Punk here is healthy, I'm happy to say. I love how free it has become in a lot of ways. There has been a series of exciting waves over the last few years and it has left us with a really thriving scene where friends come together to play everything from noise punk to death metal to raw punk to stoner rock, etc. There are shit loads of bands doing their thing and releasing records and touring overseas, which has always been more difficult, coming from a blighted little island floating in the Atlantic soup! There are some punk-run spaces here and that has been a great boost for our scene. Tenter Hooks is a new gig/social space on the south of the city and the Karate Klub is a long running practice/social space on the north side. There is also the incredible Barricade Inn, a new squatted social center that is putting on shows, running vegan cafes, workshops and loads more. There are far too many bands to list but check out Gaze, Disguise, New Gods, Strong Boys, Sissy, Wizards of Firetop Mountain, Fag Enablerz, Zom, Scum Heads, Seizure, and Burnchurch for starters. Not quite in Dublin but just outside it, and where many bands record, is the infamous Hive recording studio. There are a number of record labels such as Dogs & Vultures and Distroy releasing bands from this city, as well as many more.

MRR: The city has a very different atmosphere than it did ten years ago, but then again perhaps that's the case in every city. What are the upsides and downsides to Dublin post-recession?
Coming out of the recession seems really to only be apparent when you listen to the radio or watch TV. The minimum wage, social welfare, and public spending are still at recession levels (cut successively for the last five years) and the health system is critically fucked, so much so that a major hospital this week told people to stay at home if possible and is using "triage methods" to deal with patients who have to wait sometimes as long as two days in emergency departments.

One major issue at the moment is a new water tax and there is a massive movement resisting it. Long story short, the government is trying to privatize our water and make us pay for the service twice (we already pay through general taxation). There have been massive national demonstrations as well as widespread community-based resistance. Our own neighborhood has been blockading the installation crews installing water meters for three weeks now. This has meant that Irish water have not managed to carry out their work but has also lead to arrests as well as defending against violence from the workers themselves. This is going on in cities and towns across the country right now.

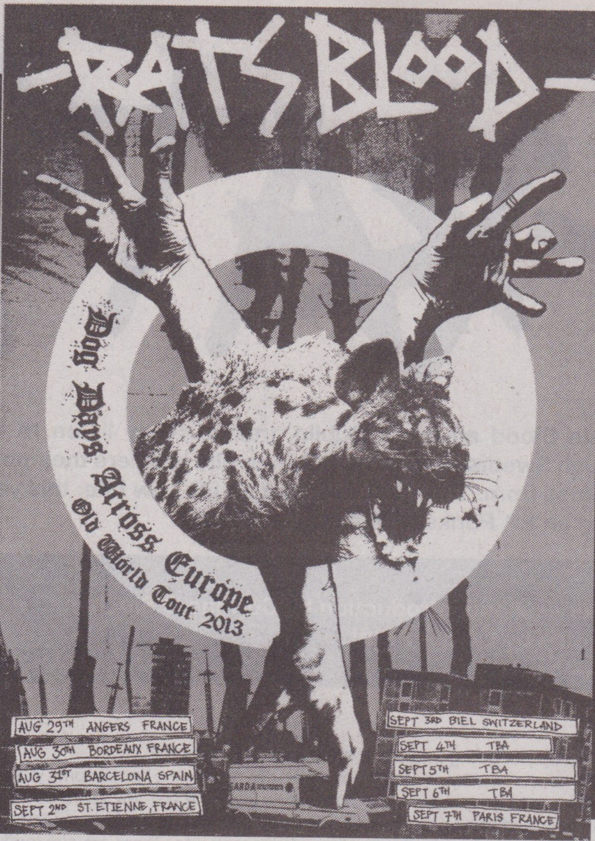
Another downside is that even though wages, welfare, etc. are at recession levels, property prices are obscenely high, with no regulation on landlords etc. This has lead to an ever-increasing homeless crisis with record numbers of whole families losing their homes and ending up on the streets. An upside of the recession has been that more and more people have been radicalized against the government. Also, more community-based projects have begun, people literally taking the power back and using it to improve their communities. There is a thriving squat scene here now, and attitudes to property and ownership have definitely changed after so many peoples homes have been repossessed by the very banks that caused the economic crisis. As a general rule here it seems that hard times equals good punk.

MRR: Would you say there's any decade in particular from which the band members draw the majority of satisfaction and inspiration from in regard to Rats Blood?
1980s, I guess. There are a lot of parallels between then and now here in Ireland. Joblessness, a right wing conservative Christian government, worldwide strife and a big healthy punk scene! But I'd say we're also inspired by a lot of what's going on right now. As my good friend Mark from Thisclose would say, "Nowadays music."

MRR: Same question with a country instead of a decade?
Country of Sweden! Also Spain, Italy, Brazil etc. Personally I can't live without worldwide punk! Direct influences for me would be Swedish hardcore such as Mob 47, Totalitär and Disarm, and Italian hardcore such as Impact, Stigmathe and Raw Power. Spanish bands of the last few years such as Invasion, Glam, Absurdo, or older bands like MG-15, IV Reich or Japanese bands such as Bastard. I could go on and on. All of us have played in many different bands over the years from crust to noise punk to sludge and hardcore. With this band we made a conscious decision to bring as much energy as we could to the sound—anger rather than misery, positive action instead of apathy and depression. That same energy that you can see in a band that have not given up in their personal lives, who seem to feel that they can still survive this shitsystem and will fight back forever. Bands like Último Resorte, Wretched or Los Crudos in the past, or Reality Crisis or Hårda Tider today. So in relation to the question, I can't pick a country. It's a particular attitude inside of those various countries that inspires me.

MRR: In consideration of both previous questions, what is it that's different about those choices as opposed to others? What do you consider the background factors that contributed to those times/places being more interesting than others?
I think my answers haven't lead directly into this question but I'll answer with a few places and times that have inspired me in a broader punk sense over the years. Of course a lot of us here in Dublin had strong links with Copenhagen and the Danish punk scene and specifically Ungdomshuset 69. That time between 2002 and 2007 really shaped who I am in a way. Being part of the fight to save the house, being involved in K-Town every year with their inclusive policy of inviting festival-goers to participate in the running of the fest, playing to hundreds of punks at K-Town and Shit Town. Their example as well as other experiences in the Netherlands, Germany and then UK, inspired us to create a politicized and militant punk scene in Dublin, start our own squats and truly try to live out our ideals. This would be another place and time that I draw influence from, the same period in our own hometown. We really embraced DIY and anarchist fundamentals at that time, were heavily involved in autonomous spaces, anti-fascism, the fight against the Iraq war at the time and many more struggles and projects. Most of us still are.

MRR: Is there a difference between subcultures like rockabilly or mod and subcultures like punk or hardcore? They both look to the past for their inspiration, and society considers them dead and gone. What prevents punk from being a mere pastiche?
Well, I've never been anything but a punk really, so I can't speak on behalf of another subculture. I think everyone looks to the past for inspiration. What else can you look to? I think if we allowed society to define us we definitely would be dead and gone. Punk is thousands of things, to millions of people. Militant political action, defending threatened social spaces on the streets of Barcelona or Athens. An anti-logging blockade benefit punk festival in the heart of old growth forest in Australia. A band that teaches street kids how to play ukuleles in Jakarta so they can make money to survive (Marginal). Or maybe just noise on a record or at a show that forces the frustration out of your brain for twenty sweat-soaked minutes and makes you taste a tiny slice of freedom. Yes, we re-use riffs and fashions and everything else. Punk has always been a photocopy of a photocopy, but it's the context in which it lives that defines it. It is blended up and spat out over and over again through different cultural filters, over different generations, mutating every time. On the streets of '70s Belfast, punk emerged from a city crippled by sectarian violence, paranoia and ethnic tension. In the '90s in Chicago it manifested as a celebration of Latino heritage and culture, in response to the white cultural dominance within the scene. In '80s South Africa it became a way for people to undermine the daily realities of an Apartheid state by subverting cultural norms and creating an alternative to the racially divided music scene. Punk is music, anti-music, and so much more. That's why I think it just cannot die.



MRR: Being into punk (or any subculture) when you're seventeen is a lot different to the experience of the same ten or twenty years later. What was once vital and novel sort of invisibly segues into being just "what you do," how you spend your time. What gets you excited about punk nowadays?
Personally, yes, my life has changed quite a bit since I was seventeen! Back then punk for me was hanging around in alleyways in town, drinking cider, soapy hair, making zines, getting a bloody nose at gigs, and spitting at bands. Soon enough though that evolved into a lot more. Today my commitments are to our social space the Karate Klub, which is a collective of around twenty-five people, a practice space for countless bands, a social space and a dirty old ghetto gym on weekends, where we train in Muay Thai and other martial arts. Muay Thai is a big part of my life, and I train about four to five days a week. Apart from that I'm in two other bands, Putrefaction and Contort.

I'm excited by the fact that there is finally a whole new crew here in Dublin, making bands, starting labels, distros and even gig/social spaces. The squat scene here is also really inspiring. They recently hosted a European Squat Convergence, which was incredible. Punks in Dublin are still involved in many struggles, from anti-fascism, to the water taxes, to the fight for personal autonomy of our bodies, given that in Ireland women are still legally prevented from the choice of abortion. Right now I'm inspired by the creativity and outright oddness of bands like Crazy Spirit or Ilegal, with their hand printed outsider art, Hävittäjät from Melbourne, nailing Finn-punk in the opposite hemisphere! Suicidas, Gasmask Terror, and so many more.

MRR: What happens next with the band? What's been the best stuff so far? Where would it go if your dreams came through?
Well, Romain has gone the way of many Irish emigrants and moved to London (only he's French!), so it's a difficult road ahead for us. We are touring Europe again this summer, now that the LP has finally been released. The best stuff so far has been the countless gigs here in Ireland, the UK, and also in France, Spain and Switzerland, where we could look out on a crowd jumping and flailing around like some half crazed monsters. Getting to make noise for these bastards and see a smile on their face means a lot to me. Getting in the van and marauding the European wasteland is always fun. We'd love to get further though. Indonesia and Malaysia would be great. I think their punk scenes are so inspiring. I would love to get to Australia and the US too. Anywhere really! Steal a plane and come pick us up!

Contact Rats Blood:
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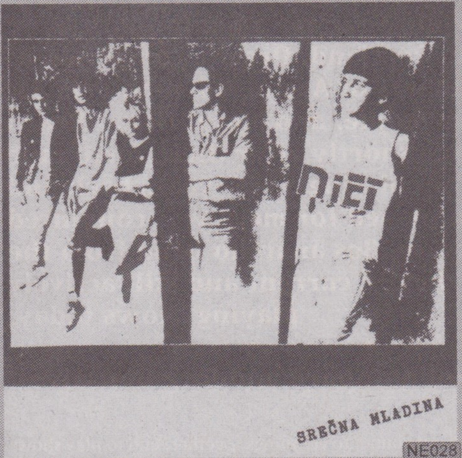

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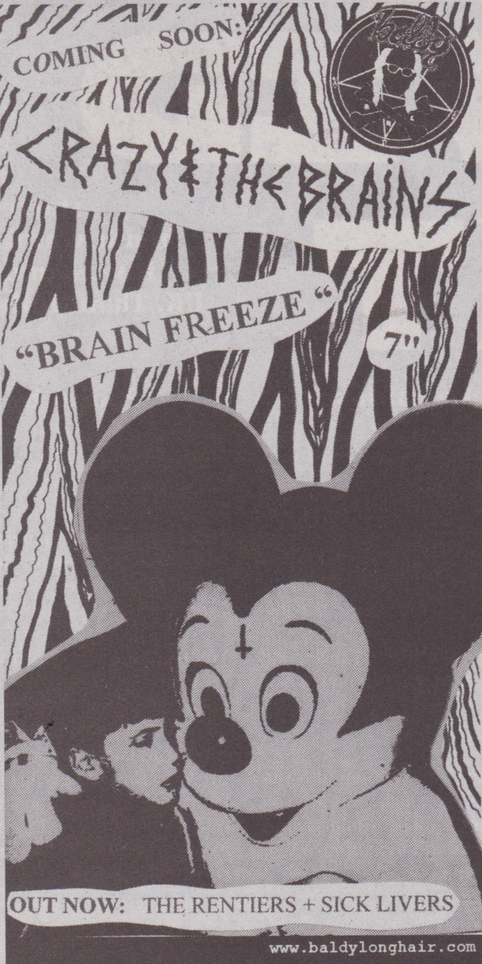

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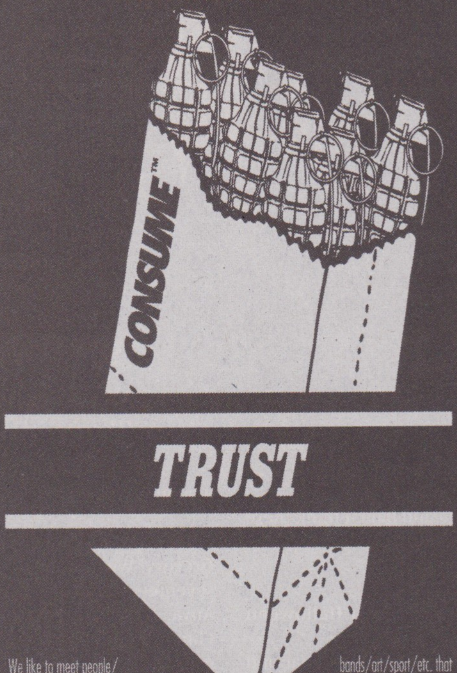

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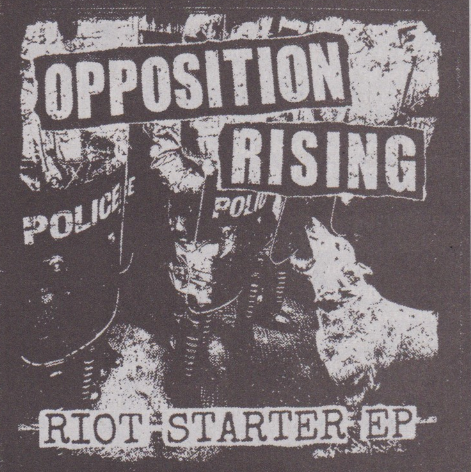

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VIVID SEKT

Vivid Sekt are a peace-punk band in Portland, Oregon comprised of members of Arctic Flowers, PMS 84, Bog People, and Moral Hex. I heard them shortly after their demo tape started circulating a few years back and hen it was first played for me, I was convinced it was an obscure '80s anarcho band from the UK. Thankfully, they're current and still actively playing shows today.

Introduction and interview by Amelia Eakins.

Photos by Neil Rathburn and Rita Gonsalves.

MRR: Tell us about your West coast tour in the fall of 2014

Gregory Plath: We went with Italian punk/goth band Horror Vacui for ten days down the West Coast in October. They were really nice and were very easy to tour with.

Anya De La Torre: The shows were really good. I feel like Horror Vacui brought a slightly different crowd out than would normally be at a Vivid Sekt show. I think a lot of people didn't really know what they were looking at while we were playing, honestly, but we were well received nonetheless.

Alex Carroccio: It was a great tour. Horror Vacui played amazingly every night, and happen to be rabidly great, fun, intelligent, and charming people. I still find myself daydreaming of laughing in the sun with them!

MRR: Any funny Koppa stories?

Gregory: Everything that guy says is funny. After spending endless time in a van with the same group of people, the weirdest things make you laugh, because you are going a bit crazy. I think that is the basis of "tour humor." Koppa would say this nonsense to the audience with a straight face. They would be confused, thinking "It must be a language barrier," and we would be dying laughing.

Anya: Koppa, aka "Sargent Pepperoni," was washing his dick in a bathroom and forgot to lock the door, so some lady and her kids walked in and saw him and it.

Alex: It's hard to pick something when everything was hilarious. Koppa is the hardest working-class clown in the world.

MRR: Koppa is a funny guy. I met him through booking Kontatto years ago, and I'm glad he keeps being in bands from Italy that continue to tour the US. So, where did you go on the West Coast? What were some of the best towns?

Gregory: We played Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, Bakersfield, Los Angeles, San Diego, Tijuana, Santa Ana, Oakland, and San Francisco. I think the best and largest show was Halloween night in Oakland. A lot of the bands and audience were in costumes. Tijuana is always fun just for the experience.

Alex: I personally love the punk scene in Southern California and Baja. I think there is something really unique and great about mostly Hispanic punk scenes in general, though, so of course I loved all those shows.

MRR: I was at the Halloween show in Oakland and it was my best Halloween ever. So, thanks for that! Who is in your current lineup?

Gregory: Anya plays bass and performs the main vocal duties. Alex plays guitar and sings. I play drums.

MRR: How has it changed over the years?

Gregory: We originally started in about 2005. Anya and I wanted to branch out from the hardcore bands we had been playing in. I wanted to try playing in the vein of my favorite peace punk bands. At that time we were unaware of any other bands doing the same thing. We asked Alex to join, but she had never played guitar before. We originally wanted to find a female singer, but were unable to find anyone that would work. Ian, aka "See See," was also a fan of the genre, and had written some lyrics for us that we liked, so we had him sing.

It took us a long time to find our sound, to get things together, and to play shows. After recordings and several mini tours, Ian needed to focus his attention on other aspects of his life. We had all of these new songs, and decided to keep it going, with Anya and Alex taking over vocal duties. I feel like our sound has become more complex as well as more melodic as we have become better musicians.

Anya: Making myself learn to sing and to play was scary as fuck, but I'm really glad I got over myself and decided to go for it.

You're doing it well, Anya! Tell us about your last release, the "From Ruin" 7". How much effort went into that?

Anya: I think that every release should feel like the culmination of all your effort up until that point, like it's an apex. This release is no exception. I feel happier and happier as each release comes out through our lifetime as a band.

Gregory: This was our first release as a three-piece. The recording went smoothly, but it took us a very long time to actually put it out. We wanted it to have a strong release with the new incarnation of the band, and I feel like it turned out well.

Alex: I love the release, except that I penned an incorrect song title on the back cover. Whoops!

MRR: What was the recording process like?

Gregory: We recorded it at Red Lantern Studios that's run out of Black Water with Adam from Autistic Youth for all of our three-piece recordings.

Anya: They make fun of me because I do everything in one take because I'm fucking perfect, but recording my singing voice was agonizing, honestly. I think it's a natural biological response to cringe at the sound of your own voice.

Alex: Recording is not my favorite thing, but Adam makes recording fun, easy and interesting. Even mixing with him is a good time.

MRR: What instruments do you use?

Gregory: What brands? I have used the same Tama Swing Star drum set since I was seventeen years old. I just have to replace parts here and there.

Anya: I use this generic brand bass called Canvas. All it says on it is "Made in China." I use a Crate combo amp, the same one I used for Moral Hex and that Ian used for Rotten Cadaver. It's old and fucked, but it's loud, and I love it like a weird amount.

Alex: I play a Gibson SG special through a Peavey ranger tube combo.

MRR: Any preference for a certain sound?

Gregory: As far as drums go, if you are playing a standard kit, I feel like your style has the largest impact on your sound. For this band, I like the simple driving beats, with lots of toms, and enough complexity to challenge me.

Anya: I use a lot of high end, pretty bright, for the bass. I don't use any pedals for this band, taking advantage of the natural subtle distortion that my crappy old amp provides to cover any "imperfections."

Alex: I keep everything dialed around the middle, with a little distortion plus reverb via my amp. Maybe one day I'll get a pedal. Maybe.

MRR: How often do you practice?

Anya: Amazingly enough, we practice pretty regularly, despite Alex having to run the whole punk scene in the western world.

Gregory: We try to practice about once per week, but we are all busy people.

MRR: I don't know how Alex does it, either! Are you guys close? Have you been in other bands together? Lived together? It seems like Portland has a small punk community with a lot of overlap.

Anya: We are all super good friends. The only reason we have managed to stay together as a band as long as we have is because we get along and communicate really well together.

Gregory: We have all been in other bands, but not together. Anya and Alex do live together. I feel like the Portland punk scene is pretty large for the size of the city. The people who play in bands usually have multiple projects at any given time.

MRR: What happened with the Mob show at Black Water?

Anya: I feel like I'm going to puke every time I think about the MOB, honestly, because they have been my favorite band since I was like sixteen.

Gregory: It was exciting to play with them, as we are all huge fans, and they are an influence on our music. When we first started, we used to cover "Another Day, Another Death," but never played it live. As far as the Black Water show, I think Alex can explain that the best.

Alex: The shows at Black Water had been getting a lot of heat from the fire marshal, probably because the stupid weekly papers refused to stop listing our shows, those jerks! The fire marshal was showing up to shows and fining the space. The fines got higher every time, and we had to come to the tough conclusion to stop doing shows. The Mob show was the last one at the Russell Street location.

MRR: What's going on with Black Water Records now? How are you each involved with the space?

Gregory: I just started a punk trivia night at the new bar with Colin Sanders (from too many bands to name). It is kind of silly, but I thought it would be fun to do something different.

Alex: I am a partner in the Black Water punk universe. Black Water Records is still on Russell Street and is still home to the record store and label. We have lost the venue but still house Red Lantern Studios, Feral Ward headquarters, ten-plus practice spaces, and art studios. We have a new second location on Northeast Broadway, where we are throwing all ages shows, serving vegan food, slinging drinks, and soon to be brewing beer on site.

MRR: I love the record store and the new space. Best vegan food in Portland! What else is going on with the Portland punk community right now?

Gregory: I have no idea. I am in semi-retirement.

MRR: I hear Portland's a good place for that. Any good new bands, besides PMS 84 and Reactor, my personal favorites at the moment?

Anya: As for really new bands, I 'am pretty partial to Spetsnaz from here, which is some ex-Life Form weirdos. Also Combat Knife from here/Olympia, which is members of ex-Life Form and Gag I have been pretty blown away with the stuff from Cryogenics from Kansas City, as well as Isotope from Oakland. As for not-so-new contemporary bands, I really like (this is not a complete list at all) Generacion Suicida, Koward, Lebenden Toten, No Sir I Won't (R.I.P.!) Savageheads (R.I.P.!) Animal Mother, Spectres, Orden Mundial, Reactor, Wild Mohicans (duh), Pura Mania, Primitive Pact, Pig DNA, Sadist, Vermin, La Misma, and Arctic Flowers. I mean, pretty much, if we are friends or if you are in a peace punk-ish band, I like your band, so...

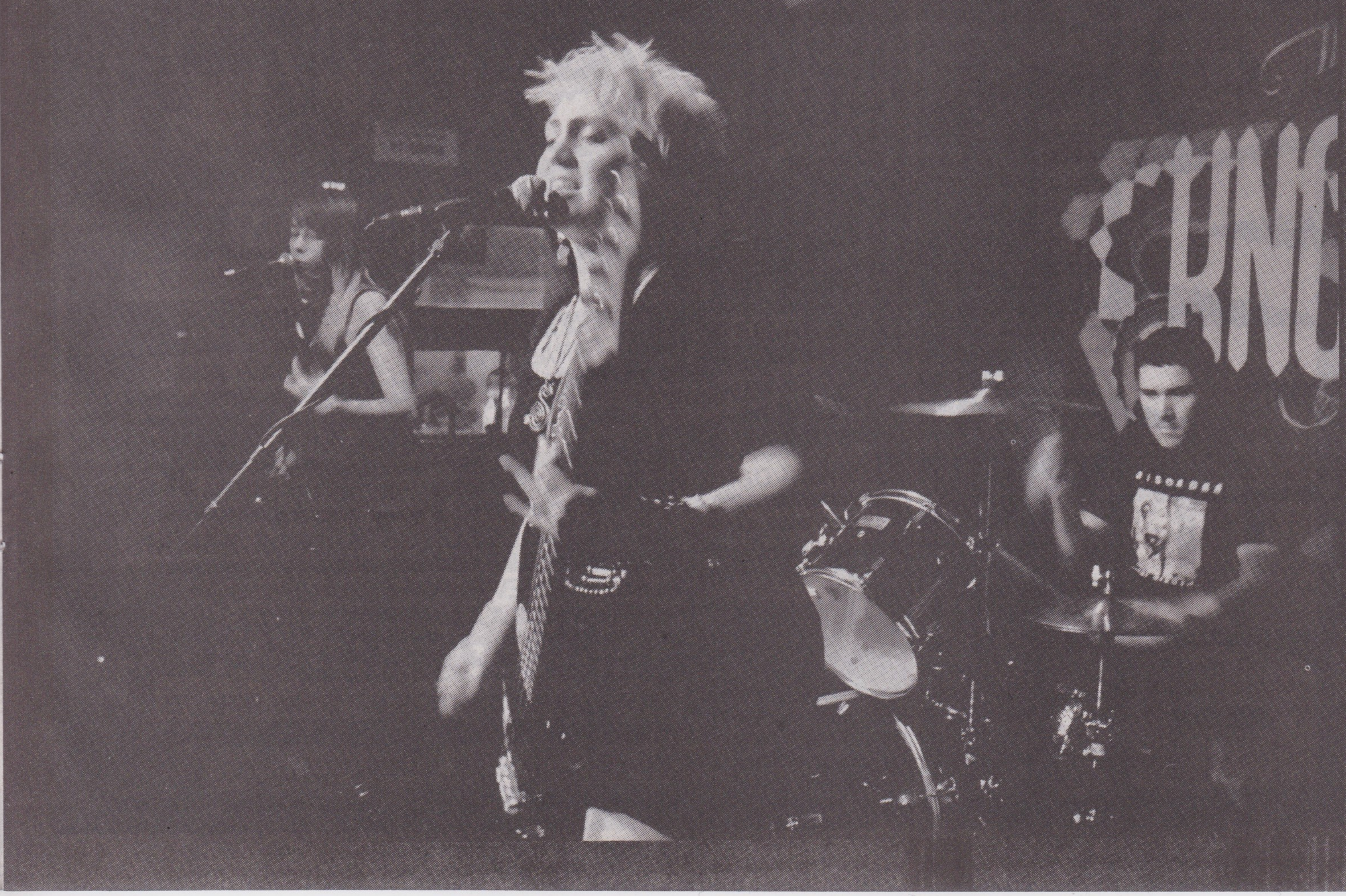
Alex: Watch out for Steel Chains and Andy Place & the Coolheads, catchy amazing new punk bands from PDX. I caught Gaasp's first set and they are another great new band to keep and ear out for. Annex and Gast from Texas blew me away on a recent tour with my other band.

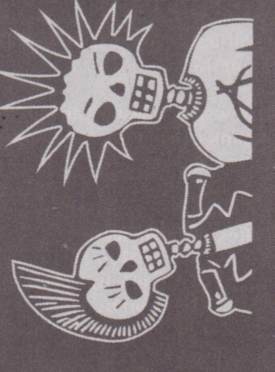
MRR: Coolheads are really, really cool. A good live band to see, for sure...even better seen at a '70s dive in Portland. So, to wrap up, what are your future band plans?

Gregory: We recorded two new songs for a 7" and re-recorded one of our old songs for compilation. We have been busy writing new material. We would like to do an East Coast tour sometime and to eventually play in Europe.

MRR: Sounds like a plan. Any last words, punks?

Anya: LONG LIVE FEMME PUNKS, LONG LIVE QUEER PUNKS, LONG LIVE TRANS PUNKS, LONG LIVE THE TRUE FREAKS AND MAY THE FUCKBOYS OF THE WORLD CASTRATE THEMSELVES IN A FIT OF MASCULINE INSIGNIFICANCE.





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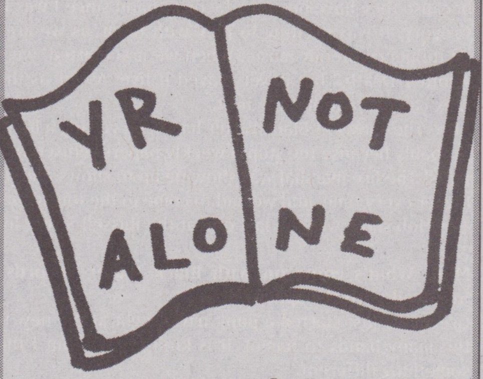

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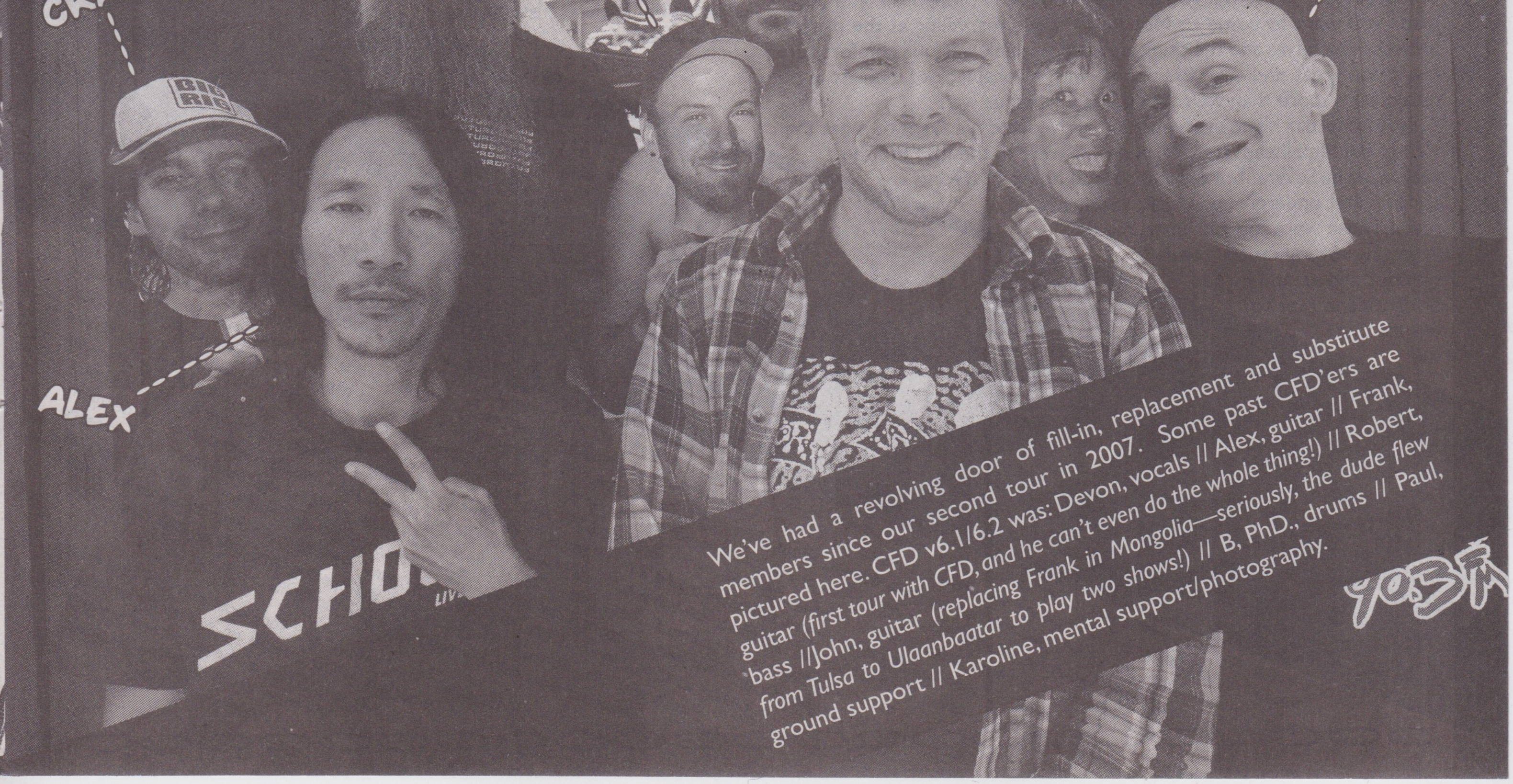
CONQUEST FOR DEATH

EAST ASIAN TOUR DIARY

MONGOLIA // CHINA // SOUTH KOREA // JAPAN

Some may already know about Conquest for Death, but for the benefit of those who do not (most of you, I'm guessing), a little background: We started in 2006 somewhat accidentally when Kiku was visiting San Francisco from Tokyo…decided to record a few tracks that turned into our first EP later that year when Kiku came back with his own band in tow for a short West Coast jaunt. On that tour we decided that, as a band, we wanted to do the things we'd never been able to do before, to go to the places we've never been before and for the last nine years that's what we've done. Since that tour, we've toured five continents (with Europe and Antarctica waiting for us somewhere on the horizon), returning home each time to regroup mentally, reload financially….and hopefully do it all again. Diary by Robert Collins, photos provided by Karoline and Robert Collins.



We've had a revolving door of fill-in, replacement and substitute members since our second tour in 2007. Some past CFD'ers are pictured here. CFD v6.1/6.2 was: Devon, vocals // Alex, guitar // Frank, guitar (first tour with CFD, *and he can't even do the whole thing!*) // Robert, bass // John, guitar (*replacing Frank in Mongolia—seriously, the dude flew from Tulsa to Ulaanbaatar to play two shows!*) // B, PhD., drums // Paul, ground support // Karoline, mental support/photography.

MONGOLIA

Perhaps it seems hard to understand, but the plans for this tour started with our desire to play in Siberia (there are a couple of small towns in the north with legitimately sick crops of hardcore bands). But otherwise simple logistics can provide interesting hurdles (especially further you get from the western or so-called "first" world/s) and those complications combined forces with a few excellent connections* and *BOOM!* We're going to Mongolia. The first reaction from most of our friends is "Whoa!! I didn't know there's a punk scene in Mongolia!" Well, there's a reason why you didn't know there's a punk scene in Mongolia….there's not a punk scene in Mongolia. But there are metal bands, and we play fast and we turn up to eleven, so we should be all set (this is our logic, you see), and our introduction to the music scene in Ulaanbaatar was in motion. We arrived in waves….

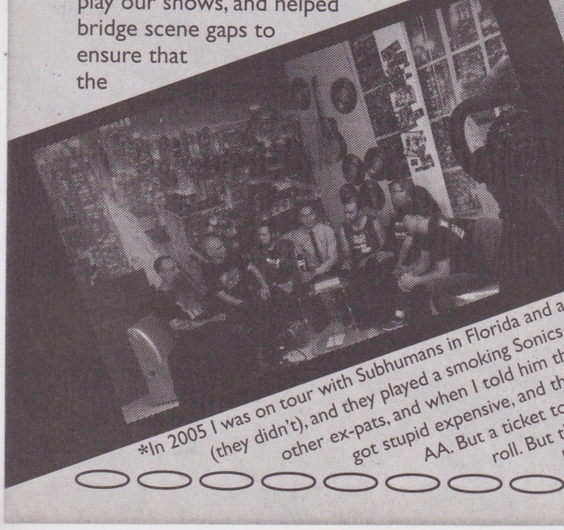
John flew into Oakland from Tulsa for two practices before we left. His first shows with Conquest for Death would be in Mongolia because…. well, because that's how we do things, and these were his first two practices with the rest of the band. Then he and I flew SF—Seoul—Ulaanbaatar, arriving a few hours before Devon. Devon flew from Seattle to LA and hung out with B and Alex in the airport before making his way to Mongolia via China…but there was a dust storm in Ulaanbaatar. It was surreal, the combination of jetlag, total culture shock, the not quite brown but definitely not normal color of the sky, and the sensory deprivation of dust all around you, moving in every direction at the same time as if it was air itself. All flights into Chinggis Khan International Airport were cancelled, so Devon spent 20+ hours in the Beijing airport waiting… accidentally meeting Brian (our tour promoter) who was also waiting for a rescheduled flight. Alex and B spent a day in Seoul, meeting up with our Korean promoter JP (more on him later) and doing tourist shit for an afternoon before having a rendezvous with Paul at the Seoul airport and flying into UB together.

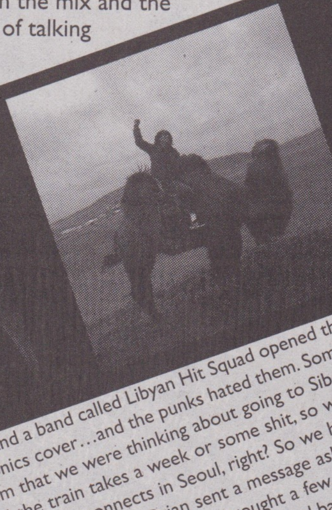
While all these travel logistics were taking place, John and I met Javkha, our video director (more on that later) and media liaison. A word about media, specifically television: Ulaanbaatar has a population of roughly 1.3 million (almost half the population of the entire country, which is staggering), but has several dozen television stations, many of which focus on music and/or entertainment…and so we would be on TV. More than once. Interviews for C1 and TV9, and Radio 102.5 were every bit as bizarre as you might imagine for a DIY punk band from the states. We answered questions like "Why are you in Mongolia?" "What do you think of Mongolia?" "What will you do while you are in Mongolia?" and "What made you want to come to Mongolia?" while marveling at the distance between ourselves and the thing we used to think was our comfort zone; but it was great, and even the people with a vocal lack of interest in our music were more than welcoming, and wished us well.

By Wednesday night, everyone had arrived and we went to meet the Mongolian Metalheads crew**. Now we were in the mix and the reality set in. Several bottles and several hours of talking about metal, underground music, touring…and metal. These were the kids instrumental in getting several crucial bands to play our shows, and helped bridge scene gaps to ensure that the shows would be diverse and as successful as possible. Indescribably important connections to have anywhere, but especially in places where there is little or no "culture" of touring bands. It just doesn't happen on an independent scale in Mongolia, and would have been impossible without help from new friends like these. Afterwards, we all but took over a guest house near the center of UB. Excitement and exhaustion were doing battle as we discussed the plans for the coming days with Javkha and Brian. Plans that included various on-location shoots for the "Is This Integrity Or Stupidity? Rock 'n Roll's A Loser's Game…And We're Winning!" video that Javkha was producing for air on Mongolian television (see earlier comment about the abundance of TV stations—it's not uncommon for new bands there to make music videos instead of demos), meeting up with Mohanik (the local band primarily responsible for promoting our UB shows), and as much tourism as we could possible cram into our brief stay.

The interviews continued on Thursday morning with the whole gang crammed into UBS Music studios trying not to laugh as B tried to avoid choking after an on-air coughing fit. Then we headed for the countryside for a few video shoots. The goal for today was to get a few shots with John playing guitar, since he would be flying back to Tulsa after the Saturday show and would miss out on some of the other shoots….cue Chinggis Khan Equestrian Statue, a 40+ meter steel statue of the most famous of all Mongolians, erected in 2008 near of the Tuul River, about an hour's drive from Ulaanbaatar. Oh wait, we also rode a camel and took pictures with vultures and eagles on the way there, but I digress. I'm not sure what could be more epic than a mean-faced paralegal (that's John) with a giant steel Chinggis Khan looming over his shoulder while playing along to the introduction of our video track blasting out of an iPhone…. except maybe if there was an eagle perched on his shoulder, because that happened too. Regular punk stuff, no big deal.

After a brilliant afternoon of tourism disguised as "work," we met up with Mohanik back in UB. One of the few Mongolian indie bands to have toured China, Brian's connection with them was instantly evident, and their assistance with our two shows was invaluable. We had dinner and walked to their rehearsal studio (which doubles as an art studio and, most importantly, a brilliant place to hang out). Nights like this are the whole point, just a bunch of people from indescribably different backgrounds meeting and trying to figure each other out. When we retired back to the guest house after a couple of hours and a couple of bottles, my head was spinning with thoughts of music, thoughts of scenes, possibilities of punk and underground music and the unbridled thrill of traveling this far outside of our comfort zone…I mean, my head might have been spinning from the vodka, but I'd like to think it was just general excitement.





Photos, left to right:
- Conquest for Death interviewed on Mongolian television
- Alex riding a camel
- John and an eagle filiming their scenes for the music video.

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*In 2005 I was on tour with Subhumans in Florida and a band called Libyan Hit Squad opened the show. They were freaky, they were weird, they rocked out like they didn't give a shit (they didn't), and they played a smoking Sonics cover…and the punks hated them. Sometime later, Craig moved to Shanghai and started the band Round Eye with a crew of other ex-pats, and when I told him that we were thinking about going to Siberia, he suggested visiting China on the same trip. But some airline folded and tickets got stupid expensive, and the train takes a week or some shit, so we turned our sights towards Japan where we could meet up with our pals in Flipout AA. But a ticket to Japan connects in Seoul, right? So we hit up JP from My Man Mike and Korea was added to the mix, because that's how we roll. But then Craig's pal Brian sent a message asking if we might want to come to Mongolia. Brian had lived there for years and now lives in Shanghai, but has brought a few bands to Ulaanbataar over the last several years, mostly Chinese acts and definitely not punk/hardcore or metal bands…but a connection is a connection when you're talking about more isolated parts of the world, so we started digging. Conveniently, the cheapest ticket from Seoul to UB had a connection in Beijing, so China was *back* on…and that's why punk rules. Because even the nerdy kid from Florida with the goofy grin who's playing in the opening band that no one cares about might someday get your band a show in Mongolia.

**Mongolian Metalheads project. Very loose and very cool crew of metal fans in UB focused on exposing Mongolian bands to the rest of the world, and bringing Western bands to Mongolia. Also, insanely nice folks.

Friday….show day! Both shows in Ulaanbaatar were in a techno/dance club called Centro (see earlier comment about no real "culture" for live punk/metal music here), and after a warm up radio interview with lots of questions asking why we weren't playing a big festival instead of a small show (a common theme in off-the-map countries—obviously any band that comes to Mongolia must be famous…right?), we headed to Centro to soundcheck. As much as cruising around UB was a culture shock, walking into Centro was like walking into a different reality, one that could exist anywhere in the world. Shimmering, pristine and ready for a party, Centro was clearly a club for people who are dressed up and ready to get down…but tonight it was going to be loud and (hopefully) wild. Extra bonus, because the booming dance club soundsystem ensured that Conquest for Death would be loud and bombastic this weekend. Perfect. A few hours of downtime after the check, but we were easily amused anyway, and with a mystery meat/mystery candy/mystery alcohol co-op grocery downstairs, it was showtime before we knew it. Purgatory Destroyer opened the show and set the bar high. We might not have known what to expect from live bands in Mongolia, but were certainly pleased to start our introduction with a face-melting crossover thrash band that could easily hold their own anywhere in the world. Game on, *let's fucking go!!* The Colors played some pop music next, and then Mohanik took the stage. Obviously we are a biased bunch, as this is the band hosting our two shows, but their live show was transcendent. Perfectly crafted psychedelic/indie songs and a stage presence that pulled you in and wouldn't let you go. The only thing good about playing after them was that our styles are so completely different that we would all but completely avoid comparison, because I wouldn't want to be compared to a band that damn good.

And then it was our turn. We've played in front of blank slates before. We've played for rooms of people who've simply never heard a hardcore punk band. It's easier when they are familiar with metal (readers of this rag who think that punk is the international musical language are fooling themselves…heavy metal is), but the crowd tonight was a couple of rockers, a few lookie-loos trying to see what the deal was, and people there to see Mohanik. So when five forty-something-year-old Americans launched into a cacophony with no space to breathe between songs and Devon started climbing the rafters…? Well, it was pretty fun. The dance club environment brought smoke machines and strobe lights into the mix, so the whole thing was a visual seizure and a wall of sound. And by 10 p.m. it was over. Why so early, you ask? Shit man, it's a techno bar, right?! Time to dance! Guest DJ set by Paul which the clubgoers loved, and the room was packed with show attendees intermingling with clubgoers, a merging of worlds that's entertaining no matter where you are. But when you're drunk in Mongolia I can assure you that the shit is hilarious. We went back to the guest house in waves, and a cab driver drove Paul, B and me to a field in the middle of nowhere and demanded about $200 for what should have been a $1.50 ride to the center of town… that was awkward.

Saturday was more sightseeing before the show with a trip to Dund Gol Records, Ulaanbaatar's only vinyl record shop. An extensive collection, exclusively made up of pressings from Communist state labels…Cuba, Latvia, North Korea, Mongolia, Soviet Union, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the list goes on for ages. You're not going to find any Jerry's Kids or Anti Cimex here, but if you're looking for jaw harp folk music from Kazakhstan or rare Soyol Erdene 45s, then shop owner Boldoo has got you covered. Also made the trek to the Black Market, an outdoor market that has…well, all of The Things. We were warned that the market was dangerous, especially for tourists (apparently we didn't blend in as well as I hoped), and when we met Javkha, our cameraman Tuvshin and our driver to head to the market, we had a new guest…he was big, and despite his pleasant demeanor, looked like he could kill a man with relative ease. When I asked if this gentleman would be joining us for our own safety, Javkha just shrugged and said, "just in case." Communist-era medals, uniforms and weapons, bronze Lenin and Hitler busts, animal hides, mattresses, trinkets and clothes and food and weird alcohol and bootleg baseball hats and more weapons…I mean, I said "everything," right?

And then came the metal show…this one was a ripper from start to finish. Thrash/death metal from Xoc Cyx, then Apabt dished out some killer Scandimetal before Recon belted out perfect '70s radio friendly AOR rock with a singer whose pipes are in league with the pros. АЯСЫН САЛХИ took the stage before us. The first metal band from Mongolia, they started playing heavy metal in the early '80s, releasing (in the most underground sense of the word) a scant few demos and live recordings over the years while their style evolved from powerthrash to death metal with the 2004 release of *Coffin Town Under The Moon*. It was an honor to share the stage with actual legends, and watching the guitarist shred with ease was a fukkn treat. Our set was notably wilder after an evening of thrash, and Devon's crowd interactions teetered on out of control, but the balance between good and bad was just about right. Ended the night at a secret bar (all the bars close at midnight, but "closing" just seems to mean "turning off the lights outside") with Brian and the Mongolian Metalheads crew and a pile of new friends, and everything ended in smiles. As with the spinning heads from the night at Mohanik's studio, it's possible that these smiles were related to the vodka, but I doubt it…

The next morning, John was gone. He had planned it that way and we were all aware that he had to get back to Tulsa to rejoin his civilian life, but B apparently forgot, and two hours into our drive to Darkhan he blurted out "Wait—*where's John*?!?" The rock'n'roll part of our Mongolian visit had come to an end.

At the risk of making this sound like a Lonely Planet guide, I'll just hit a few highlights from the remainder of our stay in Mongolia:

- Met with the singer who worked on the remixed version of the song we are using for the video and shot some scenes with her. Also met the *morin khuur* (aka horsehead fiddle) player involved in the remix. He was having a little trouble playing along with the track because he was drunk. He also said that he didn't remember recording the tracks…because he was drunk when he did it. He was very nice, and seemed legitimately confused by everything that was happening.
- Spent three nights in a ger outside of Darkhan city with Tuvshin and our security guy and a small family that Javkha's father was friends with, filming scenes for the video, riding horses and wrestling a 66-year-old horse trainer. We all lost, but Paul lost worse. See below.
- Went to a hospital so Paul could experience getting a cast in a foreign land. Didn't know that this was on his bucket list, but it's definitely off now.
- Drank vodka at 8 a.m., not because we were on vacation but because we were just fitting in with the locals.
- Cruised through a smaller but equally awesome black market in of Darkhan, with one of the most impressive and fragrant arrays of raw meat I've ever seen.
- More video shoots on the steppe, in the ger, with horses…basically suspending anything approaching our Western version of reality.
- Did I mention that there was vodka? Because there was.

We returned from the ger outside of Darkhan, dropping Paul at the hospital and dispatching me to buy him some sweatpants that would fit over his cast at the State Department Store before assembling the gang and our stuff and heading to the airport. Saying goodbye is hard, but being in a bigass hurry takes a bit of the sting out of a long farewell. Eternal gratitude to Brian for spearheading the whole thing, and introducing us to our crucial ground team of Javkha, Tuvshin, the dude who protected us but didn't really talk (though he did sing a bit when he drank vodka), and our driver who rocked a bootleg Oakland A's hat…until Paul gifted him a real one. It goes without saying that this last half of the trip was fascinating, but these are tales for a travel journal, and not a tour diary per se. As for the punk part of the tour? That picked right back up when we landed in Beijing…

CHINA

We were only scheduled in Beijing for 40 some odd hours (pro tip: no visas required for most western travelers staying in a few select cities for fewer than 72 hours), but we had every intention of making the most of it. There was only one show booked, a Wednesday at School Live Bar in the Youth Culture district, a descriptor that we would soon learn was extremely accurate. Nevin was our guide and our organizer—empresario of Genjing Records, and founding member of Beijing based multi-national fastcore outfit Fanzui Xiangfa. Another American ex-pat, Nevin has been in Beijing for a decade, which means he's seen the punk movement there grow from its infancy…in other words, we had a pretty good guide. From the airport we went to our hostel by taxi, a congestion-free journey across Beijing's sprawling metropolis. We were staying in the center of all the hip bars/clubs/galleries/restaurants, just a few doors down from the bar where we would be playing the following night, and a relatively short distance from the sights we planned to see the following morning. Regular stuff: got settled, walked to get food ("walked" is a generous description of what Paul and his newfound cast were doing, poor dude and his broken foot were hurting pretty bad), then popped into School Bar to say hello and check out the digs for the upcoming action…good spot, very welcoming owners and staff, and it looked like we were gonna have a good time.

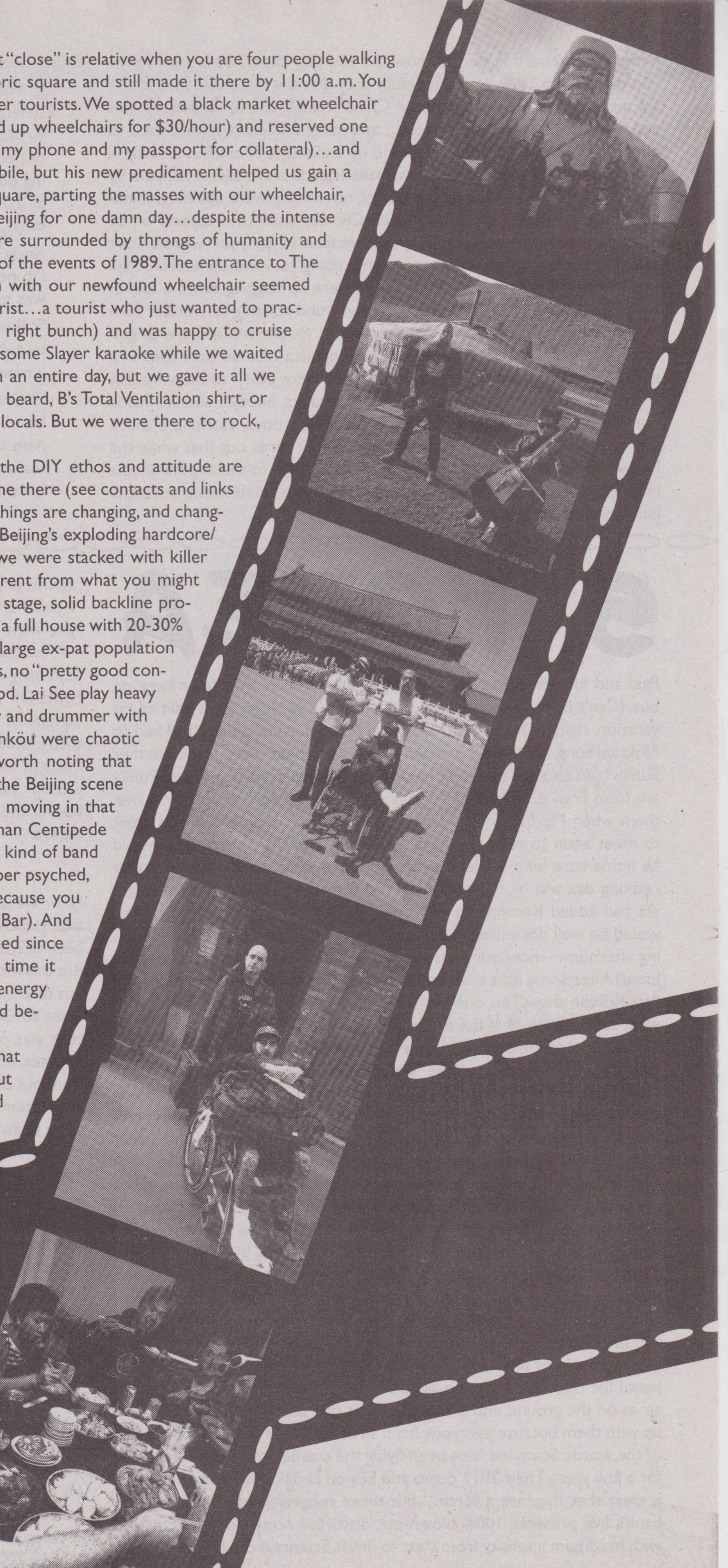
Imagine you have one fukkn day in a place as massive and as historic as Beijing. Bearing in mind that The Great Wall would have eaten up virtually all of our available time, mostly spent in traffic, what do you want to see? Ancient shit? Yeah, us too. So while Alex cruised around the neighborhood where we would play later (he's been to Beijing before, so understandably he didn't mind avoiding the tourist shit), the rest of us headed to Tiananmen Square and The Forbidden City. Unfortunately, Paul's situation got worse, and the decrease corresponded directly with the increase in his discomfort and frustration as the reality set in that our plans for Power Tourism were going to be severely hampered

This spread photos, top to bottom: Conquest for
a music video in Mongolia; B, Robert, and broken-toed Paul
with a broken foot) preparing to leave for South Korea; Pu
Following spread photos, top to bottom: Manixi

by his broken foot. A couple of Metro trips got us close, but "close" is relative when you are four people walking on seven-and-a-half feet, so we snagged a taxi to the historic square and still made it there by 11:00 a.m. You know who got there *before* 11 a.m.? Roughly 100,000 other tourists. We spotted a black market wheelchair rental agency (read: two sketchy ladies renting super fucked up wheelchairs for $30/hour) and reserved one for Paul after much haggling (no, I'm not going to give you my phone and my passport for collateral)…and then the day took a turn. Not only was Paul instantly mobile, but his new predicament helped us gain a much wider berth than our foreign-ness did. We hit the square, parting the masses with our wheelchair, took pictures, did the things that you do when you're in Beijing for one damn day…despite the intense history of Tiananmen, it's difficult to take it in when you're surrounded by throngs of humanity and the government has completely whitewashed all evidence of the events of 1989. The entrance to The Forbidden City was crowded enough that even getting in with our newfound wheelchair seemed daunting. As we were contemplating our day, we met a tourist…a tourist who just wanted to practice her English (and we do like to talk, so she found the right bunch) and was happy to cruise around with us for the whole afternoon, plowing through some Slayer karaoke while we waited for the crowds to die down. The Forbidden City is worth an entire day, but we gave it all we could for a few hours, and whether it was the tattoos, my beard, B's Total Ventilation shirt, or Paul's wheelchair, I'd say we were pretty popular with the locals. But we were there to rock, and we made our way back to the hostel to get ready.

Punk *sounds* have been in China for years, but the DIY ethos and attitude are catching on fast. I can't pretend to be an expert on the scene there (see contacts and links for some punks who *are* experts), but you could feel that things are changing, and changing fast. School Bar is a small joint, but is a crucial part of Beijing's exploding hardcore/punk scene, and though our show was on a Wednesday, we were stacked with killer locals…and it was a free gig. The setup was not that different from what you might expect from a US bar show anywhere in the world: small stage, solid backline provided (this is the norm in Asia, by the way…so civil), smoky, a full house with 20-30% foreigners, which seems about right for a city with such a large ex-pat population and a burgeoning scene. The bands were killer. No qualifiers, no "pretty good considering it's a young scene" bullshit. The bands ripped. Period. Lai See play heavy hardcore with crushing breakdowns, super positive energy and drummer with a deadly snare hand and a constant smile on her face. Zankäu were chaotic crust with erratic song construction and dual vocals…worth noting that the Japanese crasher crust style is starting to creep into the Beijing scene (both the fashion and the music), and Zankäu seem to be moving in that direction, which clearly suits them well. Dr. Liu & the Human Centipede dished out loud, fast and high-energy hardcore punk…the kind of band that you want to play right before you because you get super psyched, but the kind of band you hate to play right after you because you know you have to bring it (plus, the singer runs School Bar). And then we played (with one guitar—first time that's happened since Philippines in '08, but that time it was Craigums and this time it was Alex), and it was a blast…the small room was full of energy and smoke, people sang along to songs they'd never heard before and the shit was generally excellent.

The show morphed seamlessly into a party that lasted until the sun came up. Endless conversations about possibilities in China and the rapidly changing political and cultural situation there. As with so many "unconventional" punk destinations, when people at



Death at the Chinggis Khan Equestrian Statue; filming
at the Forbidden City in Beijing; Devon and Paul (still
nks enjoying a meal at Ryo's family home
ve (by Karoline Collins); pre-show izakaya in Yokkaichi

home ask "whoa, that's crazy! how did you play there? do people know you there?" No. They don't. Hopefully they do now, but they surely didn't six months ago. You want to tour China? Reach out to Chinese punks and express interest in their scene…and make the effort. I don't want to diminish the bands (including us) who *do* make that effort, but it really is that fukkn easy. Make connections, make friends, and make it happen. By the time I stumbled back to the hostel, my wheels were spinning, thinking of the possibility of a three week Chinese train tour capped off by a couple of shows in North Korea…because when your wheels start spinning, there's no telling where you're going to wind up. Devon, Paul and I were flying to Seoul at ten so we were up flagging down a taxi at seven…we were still flagging a taxi at eight, and starting to wonder how long it would take us to walk to the airport (public transport with guitars/merch/luggage *and* a dude with a Mongolian cast on how foot in a stolen wheelchair just wasn't an option). We were down to the wire, but a commuting businessman sorted us out (thanks, buddy!) and we made our flights…barely. Alex and B were the smart ones, catching a much more humane flight in the early evening…and it turns out that while the first wave were freaking out trying to find get a ride to the airport amidst morning rush hour madness, Alex and Nevin were still drinking at School Bar. Good job, dudes.

Other noteworthy tidbits from Beijing:

- Public toilets are EVERYWHERE. Many apartments do not have toilets, so there are 24-hour well-maintained public restrooms on virtually every block in the center areas of Beijing. Watching the lines of people waiting to take their morning shit while we were staggering out of the hostel was a little surreal, but it sure was convenient at 3:00 a.m.!
- We never took the wheelchair back, so maybe we stole it? But it really was a piece of shit, and with a $30 rental *plus* a $30 deposit, I'm not really sure who got hustled. Wait, yes I am. It was us. But it was totally worth it.
- Bombing down 600-year-old ramps in a stolen wheelchair is pretty fun, and other tourists will cheer for you. Including 80-year-old women in wheelchairs.
- Check the prices on the tea and beer at Slayer-friendly karaoke bars before you start ordering. Trust me. You'll thank me for this one. Also, check the final bill before you offer to pay for your bandmates' tea and beer at a Slayer-friendly karaoke bar. Ask B. You'll thank me for this one too.

S. KOREA

Paul and his wheelchair were pretty much on their own from here on out. (Can't blame a man who wants to go on vacation for a part of his vacation, right?) Devon and I hit Seoul just before noon and trekked to Noksapyeong, the metro station where we would meet JP his partner Punky (and also the one right next to the US military base). JP and Punky are from France, and have been living in Seoul for several years. We met them when My Man Mike toured the states last year and it was great to meet again to start the next leg of our trip. Their apartment would be home base for a while, but mostly I think we needed a nap. A mostly relaxing day, and by the time Alex and B made it in well after midnight we had added Karoline to our crew as well (ensuring that everything would be well documented from here on out). Frank landed the following afternoon—now our posse was complete. (How's Tulsa treating you, John?) After some light tourism, we made our way to Space Moon for the first Korean show. This one looked to be a killer, as we were playing with what seemed like *all of* the bands.

The Seoul scene is small, but the bands are great and internet research (technical term meant to make "watching youtube" seem more scientific than it actually is) indicated the punks were enthusiastic. My research was spot on. Space Moon is a decent-sized basement venue (the show was moved last minute because a fancy hotel opened up across the street from the old venue and apparently fancy hotel patrons don't like punk rockers, which is weird) with an awkward shallow sideways stage, but the sound was good and the vibe was even better. We shared that shallow stage with Nahu (guitar/drums/vocal grind/PV), the Kitsches (super energetic punk), Christfuck (Guitar/drum/vocal grind, but this time with a singer that defies description. Blood, underwear, inverted crucifixes, and more!), Dead Gakkahs (blistering and harsh fastcore/thrash), Gonguri (sludge/doom), and the two best-known bands from the scene, Scumraid and the Geeks. The Geeks have been at it for years, and have been to the USA a couple of times, but I don't know that any of us were really prepared for their live show. So tight, so much energy, as much time in the air as on the ground, and it was clear that this scene had basically grown up with them because everyone from all of the bands seemed to know all of the words. Scumraid have been flying the crasher crust flag at full mast for a few years. Their 2012 demo and EPs on D-Takt and Iron Lung make it clear that they are a force….but those recordings do not *touch* this band's live prowess. 100% blown-out distorted noise not music played with maximum intensity from start to finish, Scumraid can hold their own against any cool band that the kids are wearing on their backpatches this week. Pure devastation and watching Juyoung play drums kinda makes you want to quit playing in bands.

After the show, all the bands (and many from the crowd) went to eat and hang out…I mean, this is what you are supposed to do after a show, right? Oh yeah. Our set. We played, and it was super fun…but honestly, compared to watching so many other bands rip the room apart and then meeting a seemingly continuous stream of great new friends, twenty minutes on stage sometimes isn't the highlight of the day. Sometimes it's just our excuse to get to experience all the other stuff! Taxis back to JP's house, and maybe we went to sleep before 3:00 a.m. Probably not, but maybe.

SEOUL TO DAEGU

Now we are on tour. I mean, we have already played a few shows and experienced a whole tour's worth of amazing shit, but until this we had been traveling by airplane and taxi and hired van, pretty opulent really. But this morning we dragged ourselves, our merch and our guitars to the bus terminal downtown and tried to figure out how to get our American asses to Daegu. JP would not be joining us at the other Korean shows, so it was pure adventure time…no sweat. Missed the first bus by a few minutes, so we took shifts wandering the terminal and generally being from out of town. Regular stuff…morning beers, ate some bread, a weird interaction with a girl who wanted to know about The Gays since we were from California and were we scared of them? Uneventful bus ride to Daegu (well, maybe it was exciting, but I slept, see "probably not, but maybe" in above paragraph), but when we exited the station our adventure *really* began. Daegu is home to roughly 2.5 million people, and our show was somewhere in the middle of a massive shopping and party district…we had casual walking directions, but these streets were teeming with humanity, and it became quickly apparent that finding Urban Lounge Bar was going to be virtually impossible without assistance. Enter: Friendly Civilian (pro tip: the key to successful travel in virtually any country) and soon we were being led through the throngs of Saturday afternoon revelers. More regular stuff followed: sound check, wandering around the neighborhood, mingling with the locals, etc…just getting ready for show time.

We were a bit of an add-on here. The show was a fest to celebrate a local skate clothing shop, and most of the bands were melodic skate/punk (notable exception: Todayxspot who dropped a brutal low-end mosh). All of the bands were good, but the highlight was watching the punk world shrink to nothing, as we ran into an American currently stationed in Daegu who Devon and I hadn't seen since the What Happens Next? tour in 2001, and a punk from Johannesburg who we met on the Conquest for Death African tour in 2008. It was especially awesome flipping through Karoline's photo zine looking at pics from that trip and getting updates on the JoBurg punks that we met there.

We walked through the neighborhood party casualties to a traditional guest house after the show, dropped our luggage and then joined everyone from the show for eating and drinking (after Frank and Alex sat in with the house blues jam band for a few tracks, of course). Frank was just now getting over his jetlag (remember, he's only been in Korea for about thirty hours at this point, and already played two shows!), and celebrated his acclamation heartily while the rest of us behaved like proper adults. Wait, that's not entirely true. We all had a fukkn party and the Daegu punks are nice as shit! Great to find out that a handful of these folks were actually from Busan and were staying at the same guest house, and we would be seeing them the following night! Back to the guest house sometime in the middle of the night and the party continued. Found out the following morning that 1) the room we were partying in was not actually a room that we had rented, and that in fact there were other non-punk guests in the building (sorry, normal people), 2) the check out time of noon was going to be strictly enforced. Like "get the fuck out of here you stupid tourists because we are dragging all your luggage outside right now" strictly. The other punks were entertained, and they loaded up while we waited for our escort back to the train station. Daegu: Success.

DAEGU TO BUSAN

Same travel formula as before (arrive, wait, wander, get on bus, fall asleep), except that we realized at some point that we were flying to Japan the morning after the Busan gig…and we were flying from Seoul. So when we arrive at Busan we secured some really expensive express train tickets that left for Seoul at 11:00 p.m., blowing all of the money we made in Seoul and giving us just eight hours in what appeared to be a beautiful and interesting city…such is life with Conquest for Death, my friends.

We had been warned that the Busan show would be small, but internet research (see earlier definition) had us pretty excited about the two bands that would be joining us this evening, All I Have and Manixive. The Basement is exactly like it sounds, and is actually smaller than many basements we've played in the states…a free show on a Sunday night, an imposing array of 1x12" combo amps (by "imposing," I mean there were three of them) and less than a dozen people in attendance? You don't understand…this is what we live for! It's hard to explain how those ingredients could equal such a perfect night, but from the minute Manixive started their set it was very clear to all of us that the logistics, the effort and the finances were well spent. Manixive used those 12" speakers to their fullest, and you could easily be excused for thinking you were watching a metal band positively own a packed arena instead of a tiny sweaty basement bar. June-Young's live presence is next level, and when they were finished we were all just stunned. While their metalcore/thrash would probably not typically be included in the pages of this fine rag, I can assure you that their performance that night was one of the punkest, most intense things I have witnessed. With the bar set that high, you'd think that All I Have would be a let down…and you'd be wrong. Making full use of the stripper pole in front of the drums (Ph wait, I forgot to mention the stripper pole in the middle of the room? Sorry, I'll try harder to remember details from now on.) and encouraging the audience to do the same, All I Have belted out a killer high-energy hardcore set with most of the audience singing along and fully in the mix (including the members of Manixive, something I love to see in local scenes). Remember, there are maybe twenty-five people in this room, including band members and bar staff…and I can't remember us being this amped to play a show. The set was everything we wanted it to be, everyone in the room crowded into the same corner where we were set up, no division at all between audience, staff, band members…sweaty and awesome for twenty-five glorious minutes. And yes, Devon used the stripper pole.

Made our train, traveled in style back to Seoul and arrived sometime before 2:00 a.m. An expensive taxi back to Punky and JP's place to gather our things, and after a couple of hours sleep we left in waves for the airport (because traveling together would be waaaay too easy, right?).

JAPAN

As is our MO, we arrive at different times and at different airports (be warned if you want to host Conquest for Death, because we are a wily bunch). Frank landed at Narita, then Robert and Karoline at Haneda, then everyone else at Narita. A little human juggling acts from our pals in Flipout AA who were our stewards for this last leg, and we found ourselves at the home of Naoki (their bassist) and Melon near Nakano station. A little time to nap and deal with our crap (you can read that as a double entendre if you like, it's appropriate either way), and we were off to Moonstep for a "Welcome Party," which is a code word for a few friends hanging out and reconnecting after way too long (our last Japanese tour was in 2009). We toured the west coast with Flipout AA in 2013, and the band features two members of Lie, who played shows in California and Japan in the early '00s with a band that Devon and Robert (and Conquest for Death-axeman-on-leave, Craigums) used to play in, so getting to spend the next week with these monkeys was like putting on a comfortable pair of shoes. And if this little informal welcome party was any indication, then the next week was going to be pretty damn wild.

TOKYO: HATSUDAI WALL

As many of you may know, shows in Japan are different…it's like most of the good things about a "pro" show at a cool club, but crammed into a typically tiny bar. Hatsudai Wall was a perfect example of this. Small basement venue with a booming system (I mean, not Busan tiny, but pretty damn small)…and tonight would be B and Frank's first show in Japan. I will never forget the look on B's face after Bumped His Head lurched into their fifth consecutive song without so much as a breath in between…his look said "Now I get it. This is what people mean when they say that seeing bands in Japan is a totally different experience." It's a distinction that would require an entirely different essay, but suffice to say that Bumped His Head's lightning fast hardcore set was a perfect introduction to our two rookies. It was a night of friends, with Freakers, Fastener (who feature another member of Lie), Breakfast (who we toured the US with in 2007) and Flipout AA. A mellow after party at Wall and then we hit the convenience store for snacks and went back home ("home" for the remainder of this report will refer to Naoki and Melon's apartment, because we completely took that place over).

YOKOHAMA: EL PUENTE

There's a dude named Shigeru who lived in SF for a few years. He's a bit of a legend in certain circles and is an all-around badass dude…so we were understandably psyched to be playing his restaurant in Yokohama! You walk in, and it looks like a restaurant, but there's killer art on the walls and then you realize that it's all gig art—Capitalist Casualties, Bastard Noise, Vivisick…we were clearly in good company. More like a US gig than a traditional Japanese live house, gigs at El Puente are on the floor, no stage, everyone crammed into a tiny ass room (and this time I *am* talking Busan tiny) and right up in your face. The best part about this is that we got to be in everyone else's face while they played! Killer start/stop hardcore from Square the Circle, a total mindfukk from Badu Erykah (two DJs, thee guitarists, two singers….chaos), and Vivisick should be familiar to readers, and I can assure you that their catchy anthemic hardcore was absolutely on point. Seeing Yokohama legends Piledriver was a total honor, and Flipout AA only sweetened the pot by convincing Systematic Death to play a few songs. For their part Flipout AA were on fukkn fire, and after the show was over we made our way to Mau (Flipout AA vocalist) and Hatsumi's place to sleep…but not before having an impromptu Isakaya at a micro bar filled with vintage memorabilia called Tiger Lily….Naoki befriended the owner (in about 30 seconds) and took our orders while we put too much hot sauce on things (when I say "we," I mean "B," and not because they rhyme) and drank too much. The Isakaya is an important thing…and this one was just a warm-up.

Saitama: Kyara

We had a few hours to kill today, so we went to a children's amusement park (that brought out the child in some of us) and to the Cup O Noodles museum (don't judge, it was fukkn cool) before getting on the train to Saitama. Geographically, we were basically going from a far south Tokyo suburb to a far north Tokyo suburb, so our travel was on the metro, but the trip took a couple of hours. Flipout AA are from Saitama, so it was a homecoming of sorts for them…Hawaiian shirts are the punk style there and there were several available for outsiders who felt like feeling like a local for the night, a nice touch. ТОЧКА and Pest were great, Flipout AA exploded the whole joint (this will be a common theme, I might as well stop mentioning that they were good each night, because they were *great* every night) and we played. Boom. Done. Except for the uchiagi (that's an after party…I'm trying to seem like I'm multi-cultural here) upstairs as our drivers took a quick nap before our drive to Fukuyama…. and sometime around 3:00 a.m. we set out on a long drive. A really long drive.

FUKUYAMA: MIJIKAN

I mean…can you write about a drive? It was long. We took naps on benches at rest stops. There was a lot of stuff in our two cars and not a lot of room for people. Add Maiko into the mix now as a driver and all around badass. She's the guitarist for Danmush and would be with us for the rest of our Japanese trip. And we drove. Sixteen-some-odd hours later we arrived in a sleepy downtown, ready to rock.

Fukuyama is off the regular Japanese tour circuit, but our pal Yum lives in the next town over. Devon met Yum sometime in the late '90s while he was traveling in the US (word to the wise, kids: punk connections pay off…remember that thing about the band from Florida that the kids at the Subhumans show didn't like? Well wait for this shit…) and then again in 2000 when What Happens Next? toured Japan. Sometime between those meetings and now, Yum somehow stayed the same awesome dude while opening a shitload of restaurants…so good for him, and he organized a show in Fukuyama that might have been at an even more untraditional venue that El Puente…it was like playing in the ballroom at a steakhouse and it was a blast. Friends from Futures popped up, Chris from Oxygen Destroyer took a boat from some tiny ass island (not as tiny as the club in Busan, but it's an island and not a bar, so the comparison might not be all that applicable). We got to see Hisataaka, Lost Numbers, and Sk8niks *(who I have actively wanted to see since their 2-track demo that was released in 2000, suffice to say that I was not disappointed)* before Flipout AA shredded that steakhouse (I know, I said I wasn't going to mention it every time, but…). After the show we rolled a few blocks to an izakaya owned by Yum and it was the quintessential Japanese after show experience: we drank, we ate, there was a spontaneous underwear ripping competition, we drank more, we ate more, there was nudity… and then the staff politely kicked us out. And there we were, on the sidewalk, wondering what the fukk we were doing…and then the staff asked us to come back inside. Like I said earlier, those connections pay off, and Yum's staff had transformed the party room into a sleeping area for all of us. Imagine raging hard in a bar/restaurant and then getting kicked out and then getting invited back in because they had rearranged that whole room for your comfort…yeah, punk is cool.

OSAKA: HOKAGE

I'm not going to lie. The next morning was rough. Yum met us in the morning and we wandered to a grocery store for breakfast and provisions for the drive…sleepy foreign shopping is a trip, and I ate a weird avocado sandwich that I made on the underground sidewalk outside because… well, because I'm a punk I guess? And Fuck McDonald's…right? Soon after, we bid farewell to our Yum and we piled back into our two cars and we were off to Osaka. Did I mention that the cars were really cramped…. like *really* cramped? Because they were.

Conquest for Death photos by Karoline Collins

But a few hours later…Osaka rules, OK? Hokage is in the heart of the cool section in the town's center (so we were able to hit Punk & Destroy *and* Time Bomb before the show….Time Bomb was having a 30% off sale, which helps a lot when you're shopping for bonzers), and we had plenty of time to split up and cruise around after we loaded in. B met up with the fellows from Completed Exhaustion (B also plays in Replica, who toured the West Coast with them a few years back) and Devon, Karoline and I got to catch up with Ryo, Tone Deaf vocalist, proud new father and our host tonight. Hokage isn't just in a basement…it's down a few treacherous flights of stairs. The bar room sits one floor *below* the live room, and the bar itself was sunken in even further. It's a super disorienting setup, but ultimately extremely cool. And of course, even though the show is held in a room that's maybe ten meters square (at most), the band sets up below a spider web of pipes holding up a professional light show and a booming sound system because….well, it sounds better that way. As is typical in Japan, the bands ruled, but tonight they ruled particularly hard. Everyone had talked up Dirty Is God and they did not disappoint. Then came Ferocious X, who dished out…um, ferocious noisy D-beat that had not mellowed one iota since I last saw them in 2006. Complete Exposition were killer on their West Coast tour, but seeing them in Japan was something else. They sounded like thunder and they seemed unstoppable (because they were, duh). Then came Tone Deaf, who we played with in Osaka in 2009, but….them fools went from being really good to being jaw-droppingly amazing. Flawless US-styled hardcore with more than a casual ear towards DC and a knack for a great breakdown. We played after Flipout AA (they were perfect, of course, that's what they do) and it was….well, it was a blast. Almost as fun as watching every other band that night! Even without considering the fact that Voco Protesta, Lastsentence and Kafka were playing another show a short walk from Hokage, and Rose Rose and S.O.B. were playing a *different* show down the damn block, our night in Osaka pretty much crushed,

After the show, we headed to the suburbs to Ryo's parents' house. A few people reading this may know what a great experience this is, but Ryo's family have been hosting punk bands for nearly two decades…and they've gotten pretty damn good at it. Even though mom and dad were sleeping when we arrived, the spread of food was mind blowing, and we ate and drank until the sun came up. After what seemed like a criminally short nap (it seemed like it was short because it was short) we were woken up by Ryo's mom setting the table for breakfast (I'm telling you, this punk stuff is cool) and we ate so much food that all we wanted to do was go to sleep. Devon, Karoline and I took a picture with mom and dad to go in the photo album next to the one we took with them fifteen years ago (those photo albums are a really incredible time capsule—years and years of bands from all over the world all given the royal treatment by this incredibly sweet family). Yeah, it was awesome. But…Aichi awaited!

AICHI: BOPPERS

We weren't going to play Nagoya on this tour. Instead we were headed to Aichi (imagine playing San Jose instead of Oakland or SF) to play Boppers. The club itself was a little bar plopped on the side of the road in a farming area surrounded by gravestone makers…a perfect setting, really. Hidehito was waiting for us with vegan food (Devon and Hidehito have been friends for 25 years now, and he always takes care of us when we are nearby), and it was clear from the vibe that tonight was gonna be a killer. It was.

Boppers is an American themed bar with a small inset corner for the bands (I know you are curious, but no, it's not as small at Busan) and little more than a vocal PA. Punk style means raging good times!! Social Porks opened the night. (Speaking of old friends, the first show I saw in Japan in 1996 featured Social Porks' drummer Naito in at least three bands. The dude has played in CFDL, Out of Touch, NEKand countless others over the last 25+ years.) Their bizzaro guitar/drums/saxophone spastic thrash was a good clue that things were going to go well and when Acute belted-out powerful Japanese hardcore it was clear that the clue was dead on. Low Card de la Morte were next and…I don't even know what to say. Mind blowing genre-bending hardcore flying in the face of punk fashion mores with cowboy hats and ponchos and higher energy than anything….well, until Not A Name Soldiers played. Insane energy and brilliant hardcore are a good combo, and these dudes blew all of our minds. After the show we went to the guest house above legendary live house Huck Finn (even more readers may recognize this spot that Ryo's parents' house) and had a comparatively mellow evening which mostly involved sleeping.

A short drive the next day, so we hit downtown and saw some sights, bought some records (I still regret not scooping the Reiko Ike record, dammit!), ate some falafel, met up with my pals in Holy Shit! outside Answer Records (ironically, they played Boppers the night after us), and then piled into the cars (they are still small and cramped at this point, in case anyone was curious), and hit the road for Mie.

Ishiya and B, Flipout AA, Contrast Attitude photos by Karoline Collins

MIE: VORTEX

Mie is off the touring map a bit, but it is home to Contrast Attitude who we would be playing with this night (and honestly, isn't that reason enough to go there?). We arrived early enough to cruise through a ghostly and empty downtown shopping area that featured a perfectly dusty toy store and some crucial record stores…I particularly enjoyed Alex for once going nuts buying records, and I also appreciated that members of Contrast Attitude took us specifically to the store that specialized in jazz records. Ornette Coleman Japanese pressings? Alex doesn't mind if he does! We met up with members of System Fucker and had a pre-show uchiage at a popular Mie izakaya that was run by a gravelly voiced woman in her 80s who clearly loved having the punks stop in (the punks clearly stopped in often). As a side note, a woman named Kyoko joined us all before the show. An absolute legend in Tokyo, Kyoko has been attending shows since the early '80s, and it's not really an exaggeration to say she's at damn near every Tokyo show of note, always up front, always stage right, always doing her awesome dance and going nuts for every band. She doesn't look "punk," more like a regular lady on vacation, but you monkeys who think punks have to dress "punk" are missing the boat on this lady. She came to the shows at Wall and Kyara, but this time she sat near us at the table and we got to chat with her a bit. You want punk credentials? How about "I had been going to see bands for several years, but it was Lip Cream that changed my life." Legend status.

Contrast Attitude started the night, absolutely perfect and raging Japanese D-beat crust assault, and it was great to finally see them in the flesh. End of Seeds feature half of CxA, but they lean more on the "traditional" Japanese HC style with screaming solos and every song is an anthem. And then….well, you know the drill by now: Flipout AA were awesome and Conquest for Death had a fukkn blast. That's pretty much how our crew operates.

A quick visit to the record store around the corner (yeah, there's a record store around the corner that's open well into the morning where I bought a single titled "Genghis Khan" for a few hundred yen because I was feeling nostalgic for Mongolia…it's a disco single, but don't judge me) and then piled into the cars (still cramped) for an overnight drive back to Tokyo.

TOKYO:, MOONSTEP

I'm sure we slept somewhere, but Maoki, Hitoshi and Mau demonstrated their road skills one last time and got us back home with plenty of time to gather our things and take a little nap before making our way to Moonstep. Remember the welcome party? Yeah…we're back. A cruise through the Nakano mall before the show netted toys and curiosities (and no Buddhist food—the nice lady we frequented in 2009 was closed for a spring holiday week, curses!), but the purpose today was rock, and the show was a killer. A night filled with old friends and a slew of new ones, Communicates opened shit up (and they were seriously one of the best bands we played with on the entire tour) on a high note, then the old guard stepped up with No Problem. Saigon Terror played ripping crossover (and were fronted for two songs by the singer's young kids). Jabara (featuring sometimes Conquest for Death guitarist Keisuke on trumpet), another set from Pest, old friends Forward and Crucial Section before Flipout AA showed that they had been keeping some reserves in the tank for the final show. I'm not kidding when I say that this is one of my favorite live bands ever. Total power, and total party with zero pretension, and punk as shit. Best dudes, and we couldn't have picked better people to spend our time with in Japan…also, Jun is a mind blowing drummer.

Also Naoki shot bottle rockets off in his mouth and things got generally weird…but shit, that's Japan, right?

TOKYO TO HOME

Naturally we left in waves….the last night was amazing, but there was real life waiting in the US. Each leg of this tour was completely different, and it was packed with things we were prepared for and experiences we never could have expected (did I mention that we filmed a scene for a music video that featured John playing guitar with a fucking vulture on his shoulder? Because that happened). Maybe after riding camels in Mongolia (that happened too), playing with a few hardcore bands in Japan seems passé, but I can assure you that each leg of this trip was a spectacular experience. And then we were back home…back to living in different cities, working different shifts, and wondering when we can do it all again. We're thinking South America in 2016…

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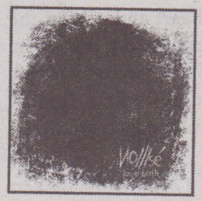

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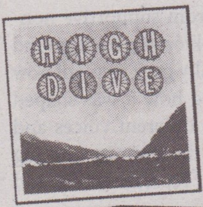

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BOOKS

A WAILING OF A TOWN
"An Oral History of Early San Pedro Punk and More"
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A Wailing Of A Town: An Oral History of Early San Pedro Punk and More
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Yet another punk related oral history. Can the collective punk bookshelves take another addition to the seeming endless array of "I was there" sprawl? Has punk overtaken the hippie nostalgia frenzy? The answer to both of those questions is yes! I would put this book up with *Lexicon Devil*, another oral history about SoCal punk, as one of the best encapsulations of the mechanics, dysfunctions and excitements of a punk scene I have read. *A Wailing of a Town* shows the other side of the coin. The kids who didn't run away to Hollywood, but rather stayed in their working class Southern California harbor town and made their own music and constructed their own idea of punk and community out of what they had. *Lexicon Devil* was ostensibly a biography of Darby Crash, but it somehow felt more like Crash was the fulcrum for a sprawling documentary report on the growth, power and dysfunctions of LA punk. This book is an oral history of San Pedro punk, and D. Boon, the city's favorite son, ends up being the heart and soul of the narrative. Where previously published punk oral histories have put across the hip /cool actions of the cognoscenti (*Please Kill Me / We Got the Neutron Bomb*, etc.), this one really communicates the true inspiring and powerful force that is getting caught up in underground DIY and making something on your own terms.

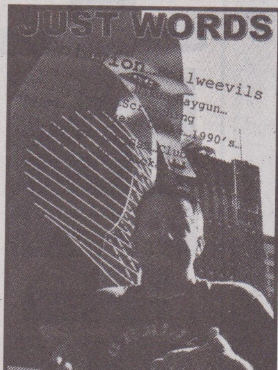
While I was reading this someone asked me if it was "a Minutemen bio"—since clearly nothing else of note happened in Pedro punk in this person's mind! One of the cooler aspects of the book is that while the Minutemen rightfully get a huge chunk of the chapters devoted to their sound and ideas, the other people who shaped a scene are given as much weight, from supportive non-musical punkers who were there to witness events or took on the background shitwork through to the wild performance artists. You really get a sense of how the San Pedro take on punk emerged from the town and how it was shaped by the different economic and geographic realities. The different voices and perspectives in the book—the macho nihilistic surf jocks, the feminist working class women of color—all give this work a true feeling of representation, and make it a fun and wild read.

The fact that the Minutemen were one of the guiding forces of the Pedro punks meant that people looked at them as examples, and as a result started their own weird bands and made their own record labels that only put out their friends' weird and/or generic bands. It was a constructive and encouraging scene, despite endless harassment from cops and jocks and angry anti-punk locals. The feeling that you get from listening to the Minutemen, the rough and tumble warmth in with the cold hard truth, *really* reflects the scene that they came up through and helped invent. On the evidence of this book, the creative, expressive and radical power embodied by their sound, from the crazed inventive music through to the impassioned lyrics, the needs of the working class and the power of Coltrane are endorsed with equal authority, shaped the San Pedro punk idea as one quite distinct from other Southern Californian scenes. Speaking of which, the chapters on Saccharine Trust are easily worth the price of admission…*Paganicons* is one of the wildest and most interesting LPs SST ever released, and despite the fact that many punks now revere Saccharine Trust, it still feels like they somehow haven't gotten their due. It was really inspiring and sometimes hilarious reading about how they formed and the ideas behind the songs, the evolution of the band and their disparate poetic, Dada, No Wave and be-bop based influences.

Punk is a visual and visceral culture, and this book does a great job of putting across the aesthetics, the sights, scents and ideas of the random assortment of people that were drawn to it. The flyers, the fanzines, the insane apartments that intentionally resembled surrealist hamster cages…They had shows in the infamous repurposed Church featured in *Decline of Western Civilization I*, a German themed village hall that sounded like a weird Euro-Tiki bar-like space complete with a rotten waterfall and ski lodge like ambiance, a repurposed theater which also had avant-garde dance classes. You get a sense of the danger from violent audience members imported from Orange County and aggressive anti-punk locals and of course, the cops, all of which is such a part of the narrative of Southern California punk. You also get a sense of the creativity and resourcefulness of the Pedro punkers in figuring out how to work around all that aggression and darkness and make a scene work.

This book is one of the best accounts of punk I have read, the interviews and excerpts are exhaustive and cover the nihilistic and constructive, the intoxicating and the mundane. Its somewhat homespun aesthetic is misleading; this book was masterfully edited by Craig Ibarra. So many perspectives and takes on different events weave together to create a powerful, emotional narrative, it was an unputdownable ride—I read this from cover to cover in a mad consuming frenzy, but had to leave the last few chapters, the ones about D. Boon's death, to read when I was alone at home, as I knew it would be devastating. It was. Reader, I wept. Unlike most artifacts from the past where it seems like all the cool stuff happened without you, in some other untouchable dimension, *A Wailing of a Town* ultimately makes you want to create something new and worthy in your own town and scene.

—Layla Gibbon



Just Words
Brian Czarnik
182 pgs • $10, $12 ppd.
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"Punk" is pretty broad, conceptually, and people invest their time in it out of various motivations. *Just Words*, the memoir of former Oblivion and Bollweevils drummer Brian Czarnik, takes us from his formative years to just after Oblivion's demise. Readers who are tolerant of misspellings, irregular capitalizations, a paucity of editing, and a jumbled chronology will get a peek into one aspect of the '90s Chicago scene.

The book's first three chapters relate Brian's history, in particular his relationship with music, prior to his joining a band. Born in 1971, he's the youngest child in a blue-collar household in the western suburbs of Chicago. As a child, a recurring stutter contributes to his severe shyness. Music pulls at him strongly, from his mother's love of Elvis to his older siblings bringing him to blues shows. He perceives rock'n'roll as being "for the outcasts, the fuck ups," and likes being differentiated this way from the masses. He learns the drums by playing along with AC/DC's *Highway to Hell* LP. He knows of the Sex Pistols, who he believes "had the perfect attitude and image for rock," but not that a punk scene still exists in Chicago.

Here the book jumps to his joining an established group, the Bollweevils, in the fall of 1991. Here, the lack of editing is acute, as he's been playing out for a couple of years with Oblivion already, but the reader hasn't heard anything about it. At this time, all-ages shows in the Chicago area were held almost exclusively at clubs in the suburbs. The Bollweevils have been playing this scene, which Brian had wanted to get into for a while. The guitar player, Ken, runs the band, and from the start they have ambitions of being a nationally-recognized touring act. The punk scene in the suburbs is extremely homogenous, so much so that the established members, Ken and Bob, consider switching singers. The guy they have, Daryl, is extremely busy with medical school, but also he's Black. Having somebody who's not a white guy in your band is perceived as a "gimmick," a way to draw attention to your band. The Bollweevils don't want to rely on this, though they end up keeping Daryl. They play out quite a bit, and make sure to stand up front and yell along as other bands play, to support the scene. Though he feels like an outsider early on, having a role does a lot to break Brian out of his shyness, and he's happy to play up his wild side, as he feels rock drummers should. Local label Underdog Records puts out some 7"s for them, and they tour out to the west coast. There Ken is able to reach a deal with a larger label, Dr. Strange, to release an LP. They "polish" their sound at the highly-regarded (for this sort of thing) Sonic Iguana studio. The record gets written up in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, which Brian sees as a sign they are "getting there." But in the scene the band catches some shit for abandoning Underdog and for their more pro sound. Brian's take is that Underdog is backlogged, while Dr. Strange can get their record out faster and distribute it better as well. It worked for the label, too. They'd just lost Face To Face to Atlantic in the post-*Dookie* major label signing binge, and adding the Bollweevils got them a band in the huge Chicago market. The Bollweevils get booked at big theatre, opening for more commercially successful bands. Here he sees that the punk kids who turned out at their smaller shows are staying away, while "clean shopping mall type kids" are the audience. While viewing this as unfortunate, he sees it's the price you gotta pay to be "a big time rocker." But when Oblivion go on their first extended tour, Brian is kicked out of the Bollweevils, leaving him devastated. He'd figured that being in two bands would double the chances of him becoming a real rock star, and he gets booted while one is on an upward career trajectory.

I never understood why his time in the Bollweevils is told out of order, because things make much more sense when presented in the context of his first band, Oblivion. They started in 1988 to play a sweet sixteen party. Brian claims their music was difficult to characterize, though he allows that many bands say this. But they started off doing hard rock covers, and soon are playing local metal gigs. These shows suck, with low attendance and zero energy, but he is the only kid in his high school playing club gigs. Things start to change for them when Brian hears the local band Sludgeworth on a college radio station. He buys their 7", and the closest thing he can compare it to is material from the *Valley Girl* soundtrack, though Sludgeworth seems to him more "real" and "honest" than most bands. He brings his bandmate to see them at the suburban club McGregor's, where they both have their minds blown. Playing for a packed crowd, who shove each other around and are crazy for the music, becomes their dream for Oblivion. They try to get Oblivion a show like this, but the bookers are familiar with them and they can only get metal gigs.

Besides playing in the Bollweevils, what opens doors in the punk scene for Oblivion is Brian's music writing. He studies journalism at a community college, where he writes about punk and alternative bands for the school paper. His articles attract the attention of established scenesters, and from these relationships Oblivion starts getting punk shows. When Chicago bands like Liz Phair and Smashing Pumpkins begin breaking nationally, Brian starts writing for other music papers, including *Punk Planet*. Between his music coverage and playing in both bands, he keeps very busy with local shows. He loves basement shows for their energy, but in the long run what intoxicates him is a club with a dressing room, real stage, and proper sound system. He's happy to play smaller punk shows, but he views them as building blocks that will lead to, if not rock stardom, at least a life as a professional drummer.

The tension between what Brian sees as jealous and uptight punks and his career goals in the punk scene is exemplified in the in-scene debate over a local club, the Metro. A big club in Chicago proper, it had a terrible reputation owing to its greed, violent bouncers, and contempt for punks. With the rise of punk's popularity in the early '90s, the club was interested in cashing in. In a meeting at the Underdog loft, a boycott of the Metro was discussed. Many Chicago bands agreed, though a number abandoned this quickly when a few policies were changed. At the meeting, Brian emphasizes he can only speak for Oblivion, and they will keep playing anywhere they're asked. Since he always went to shows there, he felt it would be hypocritical to not play. He doesn't hold the Metro entirely responsible for the violence, as "some punk kids were assholes at shows." Besides, he reasons, many of the bands agreeing to the boycott "would never be asked" to play there anyway. After the minor policy changes, the Bollweevils go so far as to record an album there, with "recorded live at the Metro" prominently printed on the back cover. Funnily enough, the performance is marred by bouncers assaulting the audience and members of other bands. The band can be heard on the record saying they'll never play the club again—but of course they do. Later, Brian books shows there, sneaking in extra merch to sell to counteract the club taking a percentage.

By the mid '90s, Oblivion is having success in the Chicago area and they decide to make a push to do the band full-time. For a couple of years, thanks to extensive touring and living with their parents, they are able to scrape out the most meager of livings, but the band never takes off. Brian becomes frustrated that he's getting older, while the kids coming to shows stay the same age. Realizing his rock dream is over, he suffers panic attacks and decides to leave the Chicago area, moving to Florida to work at a big-cat sanctuary. He gets married, but it doesn't last. He eventually moves back to Chicago, where he lives today.

In reading the book, I tried to discern what Brian got out of punk, and what he brought to it. He did do a lot of work for the bands he was into and was friends with—writing them up, booking them and playing tons of local shows to support touring bands. He identifies certain things as punk—"pissing people off," being "rebellious," "questioning authority"—but rarely is there any concrete expression of them. Oblivion's main inspirations are Taco Bell and Dr. Pepper. On tour, Brian "wants to do the Mötley Crüe rock star thing," visiting a strip club and even Hooters! While criticizing punks for being "touchy" "scene police" pushing "rules and regulations," he can't articulate what the punks are actually for or against. He recognizes music that's "too mainstream" will draw their ire, but otherwise he seems to have a blind spot. He says most punks are "anti-nationalist or something. Not really proud to be anything and hated politics..." For a while, he believes the '90s punk scene has a chance to be a "revolution," but the revolution he seems to have in mind is him and his friends getting rich playing music. He was into punk 'cause the shows were better. DIY was empowering to him, but he remained a goofy suburban metal guy at heart. That's fine, but no careerists in the basement, please.

Any review of *Just Words* would be incomplete without a mention of "girls." Certainly "girls" are prominent in the story, but rarely in the sense of women who speak or contribute anything. Maybe the only one is the girlfriend of his ex-bandmate, who he's using as a go-between. Even then, "she was cute so I didn't mind talking to her." It's more "girls" as a reward for success, like "meet girls and get rich," or "girls" as a metaphor for something you want, like a snare drum. Girls are also useful on stage, as a prop for jokes about incest or domestic violence. A woman who wasn't into him then "is probably some old fat housewife" now. Another time, a woman's not into him, so he tells other people she has a sexually transmitted disease. He identifies as having "a sick sense of humor," and being "perverted," but you can be those things and not be constantly shitty regarding women. He's not into the "macho football-like atmosphere" found too often in the pit, and despite having no gay members, Oblivion was booked at a Homocore show, so he's not reactionary in all areas. The casual misogyny prevalent in this book sucks.

The memoir does have some redeeming features. Brian comes across as humble and hard-working, and some of the stories and one-liners in the book are funny. If you always wanted to know what it was like to try to cash in on the '90s punk wave and, like most bands everywhere, not make it, it's here. Chicago venues of the era are well-represented, for the sake of history and nostalgia. On the other hand… The book was barely edited and hurriedly thrown together. The accompanying photos (and videos) are all online (facebook.com/justwordsandmusic). This is a cost-effective choice, but it doesn't make the book better. He comes to punk 'cause he wants the audience, not from hating society. His main goal is to play music professionally, and he's happy to work with the shittiest clubs if he can be onstage. He didn't learn nothin' about feminism or anything else from the years he devoted to punk. While his narrative voice is engaging, it's not a book which draws one in, or what you'd call a great read.

—Jeff Mason

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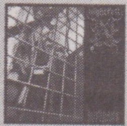

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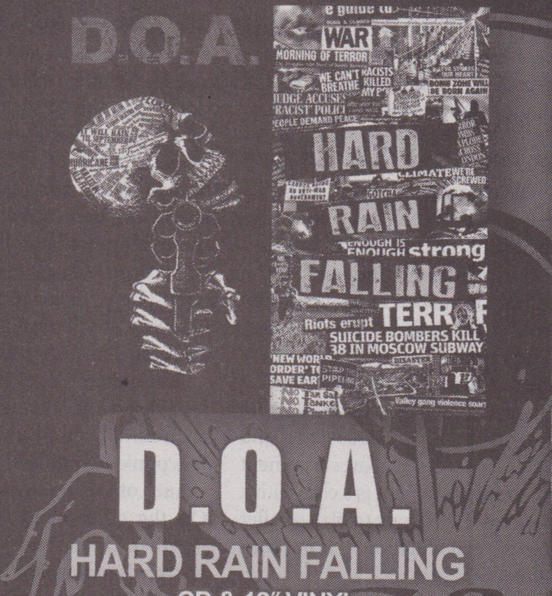

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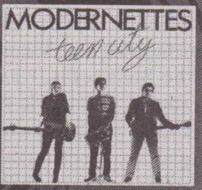

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MOVIES

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CAROLYN KEDDY

MANY MUSIC LESSONS

I had the best movie going experience this month. I had a few hours to kill in San Francisco between doing my radio show and heading to *MRR* for a meeting. Looking for something to pass the time I checked the film listings to see if I might be able to squeeze in a movie. I came across the Brian Wilson biopic **Love And Mercy** at the Opera Plaza cinema. The Opera Plaza is not the best place to see a film. The theaters are small and the screens are too. It's a bit better than watching it at my house. It is probably not surprising that I was the only one there so I ended up with a private screening. That was well worth my $8 matinee admission.

I feel really guilty about that. The Opera Plaza might not be a great theater, but I am always glad it is there. It is in a central location to most places I go in the city so it is always a good choice when I have a few free hours. Conversely, that means it is probably not long for this place. San Francisco real estate prices are out of control these days. The McDonald's across the street from the theater recently closed. I would like to assume that is because people are finally getting smart and not eating shitty fast food, but I know that isn't true. It is likely to make room for more condos. If McDonald's can't survive in this town, how can a small movie theater that no one patronizes? It's a bummer.

I am very curious as to why **Love And Mercy** focused on the two specific moments of Brian Wilson's life it does. **Love And Mercy** does not cover the usual biopic areas. The scenes alternate between Wilson in the mid '60s and Wilson in the '80s. Wilson is played by two different actors, Paul Dano and John Cusack respectively. The main focus is the '80s Wilson. In the beginning of the film Wilson meets a car saleswoman Melinda Ledbetter. Ledbetter is charmed by Wilson before she realizes who he is. Wilson is under control of his therapist Eugene Landy who tries to control his relationship with Ledbetter as well.

The scenes flashback to the post-stardom Beach Boys. Wilson has a horrible experience while flying with the band. He decides he no longer wants to perform live. He would rather focus on recording songs in the studio. Wilson is shown orchestrating the Wrecking Crew through songs that would become the *Pet Sounds* album. He seems eccentric, but truly knows what he wants. The musicians are amused by him and admire him. It is also at this time that Wilson is introduced to LSD.

It may be the point of **Love And Mercy** to show the beginning of Wilson's drug use versus his resultant drug state. The film does little to set up the relationships between the periphery characters. It is assumed everyone knows the overall Brian Wilson story especially how Landy came to treat Wilson and what their relationship became. Landy is played by Paul Giamatti who does an excellent job being a sleazy, controlling madman. The scene where Wilson eats a hamburger after Landy told him to wait is overly creepy.

I may be overthinking the whole thing. **Love And Mercy** is an interesting film. Switching between decades and using different actors to portray Wilson is ambitious. It creates a strange puzzle of one person's life. That I am left wondering how these two moments connect makes a better than average biopic. (loveandmercyfilm.com)

Brian Wilson is now considered a genius, but even he had trouble convincing everyone of it at the time. Fellow musician Jobriath had even a harder time. He never managed a get a hit. **Jobriath A.D.** tells the story of Jobriath's non-rise to rock stardom.

Jobriath got his start in the Los Angeles production of *Hair*. It was so successful that when the director took it to New York, he took most of the cast including Jobriath. Jobriath ends up getting fired in New York, but his friends seem to agree it was for the best. Now he could focus on what he really wanted to do, making his own music.

Jobriath played the piano and created music with some lush orchestrations and overtly gay themes. He sounds a lot like David Bowie. He made a deal with a New York club promoter Jerry Brandt. Brandt did what he does—promote. The hype never lived up to the public's expectations. Jobriath released two albums and then retired from the music business. He later reemerged under a new name, Cole Berlin, as a lounge piano player.

I have seen enough music documentaries to know that success isn't always guaranteed. There are many talented and deserving people who have failed to make that breakthrough. In hindsight it always seems like there should be a reason for this. The people involved need to designate blame. Unfortunately, who becomes popular and who doesn't never makes any sense. **Jobriath A.D.** gives Jobriath's manager Brandt the brunt of the castigation for Jobriath's failure. While he may be sleazy and may have done things wrong, I don't see it as entirely his fault. It's the luck of the draw. Perhaps if Jobriath was still around he would defend Brandt. Or at least clear up any doubts I have.

Still Jobriath has a wide range of fans including Joe Elliott of Def Leppard who cover one of his songs (Elliott appears in **Jobriath A.D.**). Morrissey, who doesn't appear, has a record where his bandmate is holding a Jobriath record on the cover. Morrissey also oversaw the release of a collection of Jobriath's music. In one of the more surprising turns I didn't realize it was Henry Rollins narrating **Jobriath A.D.** until I saw his name in the end credits. (jobriaththemovie.com)

There are many reasons to hate rich people. **Tim's Vermeer** presents an excellent one. Tim Jenison is an inventor who made a bunch of money creating computer graphics and other technology for television. He is also obsessed with the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer. He is convinced that Vermeer used some type of mechanical help to make his paintings so lifelike. Jenison begins his quest to see if he can duplicate a Vermeer painting.

The idea of **Tim's Vermeer** is intriguing. Can someone who has never painted paint like a master? It is the way Jenison goes about it that is so annoying. He selects *The Music Lesson* as the painting he will try to duplicate. In order to lend authenticity to the set-up, he decides he also needs to replicate the environment in which Vermeer painted. Jenison recreates Vermeer's 17th century painting studio in a warehouse in Texas. Everything is built by hand as would have been done back then with Jenison teaching himself how to do carpentry, plaster, create glass and even blend paint.

I would like to simply admire Jenison's ambition and talent for what it is. It is very impressive. However, I can't help but think what an incredible waste of money the whole thing is. There are so many better things to use money for than to be able to prove Vermeer did not paint his paintings traditionally. Why not start painting your own ideas, in your own style? The whole process takes Jenison five years to accomplish. Was he successful? I guess that depends on your perspective.

That said **Tim's Vermeer** is still a fascinating film. It is also directed by Teller. (sonyclassics.com/timsvermeer)

For one last laugh, I'll add that I was utterly amused to see a scene in **Mission: Impossible Rogue Nation** where Tom Cruise goes into a record store that seems to stock only vinyl. He picks up a record that contains his assignment and goes to listen to it in the listening booth. I guess all the reports are true. Vinyl is making a comeback.

I am always looking for films to review. If you made one, send a copy to Maximum Rocknoll, *ATTN. Carolyn Keddy, PO Box 460760, San Francisco, CA 94146-0760. If your film is playing in the San Francisco Bay Area let me know at carolyn@maximumrocknroll.com. I will go see it. carolynkeddy.com*

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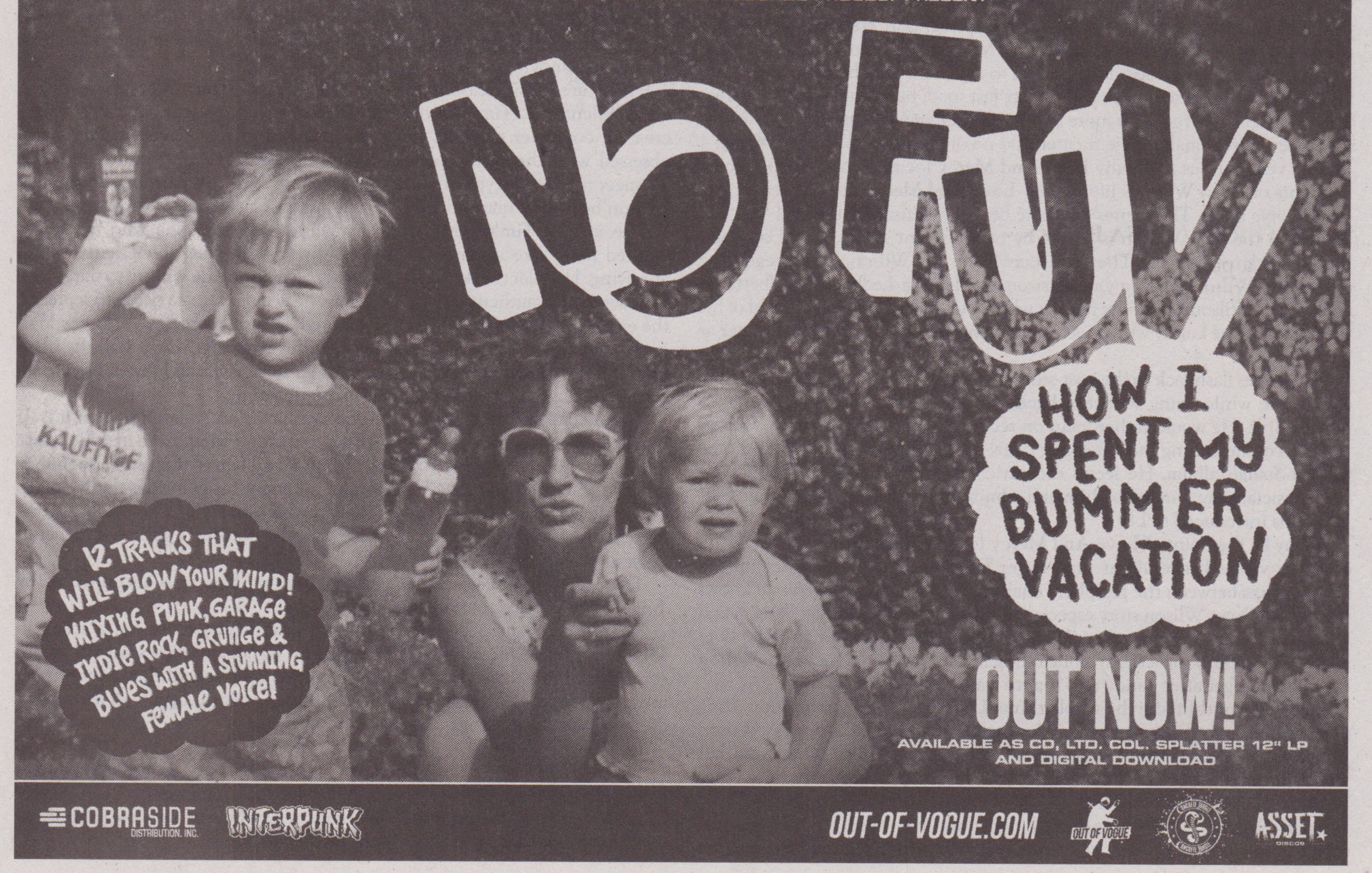
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AJAX – "Priced" EP

What can this humble reviewer say about one of the best bands in the USA right now? I would be remiss to not tip my hat to the incredible pedigree of groups the members have participated in before AJAX, such as NOMOS, WARTHOG, DUSTHEADS, and the Bay Area's own RED HANDED. It's as if, through a subtle kind of hardcore osmosis, they've taken all the hard-hitting aspects of classic US fare and married it with a SHITLICKERS vibe, while the vocalist channels a BASTARD delivery. Every so often, the buzzsaw guitars break out of form and everything gets swallowed in short, tense solos reminiscent of the NWOBHM. This new EP is raw, crazy and feral. Pick it up if you like music. For fans of Cletus the slack-jawed yokel, two-liter bottles of cider, August on the East Coast. (MW)
(Static Shock)

ALIUSTERRA / ROSA PARKS – split EP

This is a pretty rad 7" from the Czech Republic. The cover folds out to show some woodcut-esque illustrations, both bands' lyrics (hand-printed, in Czech with English translations), and contact info for the many labels. The reverse is a stark but engaging hand-drawn poster. Orlová's ROSA PARKS switch between some semi-awkward, mid-tempo material and driving, melodic hardcore. The main vocalist sings nicely enough, in a narrow range, but never wild or impassioned the way the backing vocals can be. The songs don't carry the momentum all the way through, partially as a result of the restrained vocals being loudest in the mix. ALIUSTERRA, from Brno—this is the jam right here! They open with a JOY DIVISION bass line before going to call-and-response on the verses, the vocalist's forceful bellows trading off with perfectly simple saxophone bleating. Catchy, swinging, with a chorus you learn the first time, this is a fucking dance party! Their other track is almost as good, with gang vocals on the chorus for you to join up with. I'm sympathetic to ROSA PARKS, but ALIUSTERRA is the band you have to hear! Get this record! (JM)
(Apatrida / Burina / Buryzone / GRF / Hjuboká Orba / Malström / Music For Liberation / Rosa Punx / Totalitarianism Still Continues / Ultima Ratio / Véva / Vörös Ordög)

ANINOKO – "Aircon" CD

Fresh from their appearances at Aklasan Fest and the Epicenter 25th Anniversary show, San Francisco Filipino punks ANINOKO check in with their debut EP. All the songs are in Tagalog, but between the little bit of English ("Donate to Twisted Red Cross"), and the back cover photo of a woman holding a sword to a soldier's throat, even those of us who don't speak it can get the idea. The band is playing raw, high-energy, pissed hardcore. The singer's killing it and, for a new-ish band, the songs are good enough. When it all gets going, the guitar gets swamped beneath everything else, but it doesn't take too much from the overall result. "Buhay At Lupa" is the best example of their style, but they drag it out some on "Buraot" to good effect. Almost a third of the (short) disc is samples, which I still believe is a little much, but at least the CD format makes it easy to move on. I would think the best is yet to come for ANINOKO, but this is a strong start. (JM)
(Aklasan)

ASTRAL SKULLS – "Sexism Sux/Bite My Tongue"

This is a bad photocopy of NEW ORDER and/or the NORMAL, like to a nearly ripoff point—all the guitar riffs are like one movement off of NEW ORDER. The lyrics are very straightforward, which is something to appreciate, but the basic-ness of these is kind of pathetic. To the point of feeling, like, can you even try? Have you heard of metaphors? I guess it's catchy. (MM)
(Psychic Hysteria)

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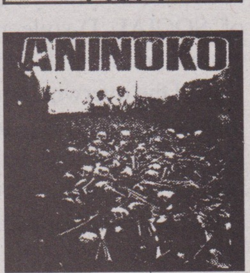
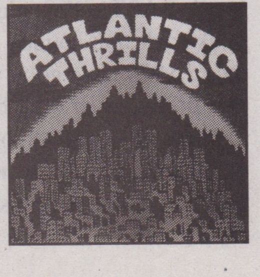




ATLANTIC THRILLS – "Bed Bugs/ Sugar Sugar"

Four-piece rock'n'pop band from Providence, RI. They know how to sing, they know how to play. They get how to meld their disparate influences from the likes of the JESUS AND MARY CHAIN, MARK SULTAN, GOODNIGHT LOVING, BLACK LIPS and the solo records from the OBLVIANS crew. It's a really good single, brightly produced with snap and verve, and deserves to be played regularly on those radio stations that encourage rock bands that still play '60-'70s-referenced rock albeit with modern production values. A quality product that will return entertainment value for your minimal investment. (RW)

(Almost Ready)

BACKROAD BURNERS – "Everywhere I Go" 12" EP

This band of Pennsylvania roughnecks turn in seven tracks of party rock'n'roll. If you're one of their crew of older, paunchy, beer-drinking, footie-loving crop-heads, you will love this. I'm sure their gigs are a frenzy of sing-alongs and raised pints. I was almost fooled by the flat caps and Fred Perrys on the cover, but this group is far from your straightforward plodding Oi! BACKROAD BURNERS mix up their sound considerably: combining elements of SOCIAL D-style punk'n'roll, country punk, and even the odd swinging sea shanty, and the overwhelming impression is one of four guys having fun playing music together just for the hell of it, not thinking they have to play a certain way to fit into a specific scene. Something refreshing about that. (AM)

(Blind Pigeon)

BASTAGES – "Scavenger Birdsongs" CD

I want to make a zine of band promo write-ups because of bands like this. Really? Your CD has "echoes of MINOR THREAT, the YARDBIRDS and even some Tex-Mex," plus an O'JAYS cover?!?! Yes!! BASTAGES play snotty and slick punk rock that sounds like it stepped right out of 1979 (in a good way). Vocals have a hint of Biafra (if only because they are delivered with that level of confidence) tinged with Neil Young (weird, I know…) and belt out political lyrics that hit all the hot topics with a welcome irreverence. This is like your dad's band that you are embarrassed by but then all your friends are like, "Shit man, your dad's band is pretty good!" (WN)

(self-released)

BLACK HOLE KIDS – "Easy Masks" LP

Y'all yeti for this? BLACK HOLE KIDS dig deep into slow, twangy hardcore with melancholy dirges and layers of depressing melody. The work quickly kicks into a racing pace with sinister, gnashing vocals. BLACK HOLE KIDS feels like knives and chains scraping against each other under the shady canopy of delicate trees swaying in the breeze, all the driving build-to-collapse of RUDIMENTARY PENI and none of the morbid morose. Awesomely catchy rock steady beats pull the songs along interspersed with heavy interludes with AT THE DRIVE-IN intensity. *Easy Masks* has that spoken-word delivery with catchy rhythm and hard-hitting punk energy. Some parts sound mathematic and minimal, which is immediately torn apart by organic hammering. This is slow-core at its finest with amazing artwork on both sides of the sleeve. A winged valkyrian mystical yeti and a huge bat drinking from a red pond. A great album for late summer anxiety. Love it. (JR)

(Social Cancer)

BOILERMAN – 10"

Five songs blow through one side of this 10" (at least they do when you play it at the correct 45 RPM). It walks a strange line between hardcore and pop punk. The songs are up-tempo, generally employing straightforward drumming and power chords paired with gruff vocals that may be screamed or yelled (two distinctly different things) or sometimes sung. There is this certain melodic (and yes, pop) aspect to the songs despite them feeling a bit dark, which may be what gets them thrown into the pop punk camp. The best thing on here is "III" (it appears fourth on the record, but we'll get to that). The first half of it is instrumental and draws on Revolution-Summer-styled bands before it goes into their typical straight punk sound—it's really pretty good. If this were just the songs "I," "II," "III" and "IV" it would be a rather unremarkable but solid release. The problem is that they stick an ALKALINE TRIO cover in the middle for no apparent reason other than to distract you from the flow of a record that would be just fine without it. (PA)

(86'd / Crapoulet / Waterslide)

BUNNYGRUNT – "Vol. 4" LP

Even though the title, cover artwork, and the first few seconds of each side are pretty clever jabs at BLACK SABBATH, this group doesn't appear to be the slightly hilarious stoners blaring tired-ass doom I expected, and I am super thankful for that. Instead we have some super dreamy basement pop that is slightly jangly at times and just a little bit cute. Not so cute that you might vomit, but yeah, it's pretty fucking cute. This is a good '90s-feeling record that I would totally blare while I clean the fuck out of my house. Like maybe if the LOOKOUTS! were on Plan-It-X (sorta) but semi-secretly wanted a record deal. Sorry, but I like this! (DZ)

(Happy Happy Birthday To Me)

COBRA DEATH – "Sick" 12"

Switzerland's COBRA DEATH self-released an LP back in 2013 and then we didn't hear much from them. On that record they played thrash-y metal, but here things get much darker. They channel early-'90s-sounding metal punk that embodies some early ENTOMBED and thrash-y crust-punk. Buzzsaw guitars and gruff understandable vocals blast through five tracks. There are also some hints of early black metal, but the punk influence still shines through, which makes this a great listen. (MH)

(Argh Fuck Kill / Kink)

CONFLICT – "Last Hour" LP

If there were any justice in this world, punks would think Tucson, Arizona, not London, England, when they heard the name CONFLICT. The superior American band released a demo tape and a single LP in the early '80s and the record gets the reissue treatment here, complete with a deluxe 40-page booklet. This is absolutely essential for all fans of classic USHC—think the thrash of early TSOL with intelligible MacKaye-esque vocals overtop, except now Ian's called Karen and she's a queer Japanese-American woman singing about things a hell of a lot more important and interesting than straightedge and post-adolescent disaffection. Not that there's anything *wrong* with anthems merely about being out

of step—some of the greatest punk songs ever written are about nothing more than that!—but at a time when being a hardcore band in the United States meant being anti-Reagan and anti-establishment seemingly by default, the political specificity of Karen's vitriol must have been refreshing. She wrote lyrics about human trafficking, nuclear war, femicide, and her lived experiences as a psychiatric nurse, a woman, and a minority, always direct and never preachy. The flyer reproductions in the enclosed glossy booklet depict those *holy shit* kinda shows that every band in '80s seemed to play, bills split with BLACK FLAG, HÜSKER DÜ, DIE KREUZEN, DEAD KENNEDYS, MINOR THREAT, CRUCIFUCKS, the MEAT PUPPETS, the GUN CLUB, to name just a few. This group should be a household name like the rest of them, but as we all know, history is rarely just. Also reproduced are two interviews with the group from the archives of the greatest punk fanzine on the planet (*ahem*), one done in their heyday and the other ten years after their dissolution, conducted by the late great Lance Hahn. Comes with a lyric sheet and photo insert. Get it. (GA)
(Puke N Vomit)

CRACKED COP SKULLS – "Every Stone I Throw" EP

After a long break (ha) of seventeen years, England's CRACKED COP SKULLS returns to vinyl. Compared with their earlier material, they've lost most of the bottom-end, all the mid-tempo stuff, and got a different singer. This record is ten quick, catchy D-beat tracks. They're pretty similar to THISCLOSE, though the female vocals are more alto than soprano. Lyrically, it's just like you'd hope: simple, but well put. "Every stone I throw is for someone I know." The songs here are pretty good, and I've been playing this a lot. (JM)
(Attitude / Bloodless)

DEAFKIDS – "The Upper Hand" LP

The psychedelic drum / vocal dirge of "Mind" means spending the first eternity of this record yearning for whatever comes next until your patience turns to anxiety, but Brazil's DEAFKIDS make your wait worthwhile. Cavernous, off-the-rails hardcore that gives new meaning to the word bombastic…tracks like "Divine Carrion" and "My Flesh" push the idea of noisy, chaotic D-beat to its absolute limits in a manner that will make noise froth while other parts of *The Upper Hand* (most notably the title track) are crushing atmospheric / apocalyptic monoliths that reach deep inside you (the closer "Broken" reads almost like a weird OM remix). I appreciate that this record makes a concerted effort to not stick to one sound, and perhaps the fact that DEAFKIDS is the creation of one person gives him the freedom to do so without anyone reining him in, but *The Upper Hand* plays as one cohesive piece…and a really damn good one. (WN)
(Riding Ancient Waves)

DECADES/FAILURES – LP

Two-piece cold wave band from Richmond. Overall this record is rich in sound but minimal. They sound like a group that probably plays with COLD CAVE. Synths move from icy to warm and dissonant vocals haunt over tracks in thick reverb. Missing is a lot of the rawness in their tones, an element which draws me so much to this type of music, but in its place is a polished and calculating sound. An album that transcends room brooding and can easily be played on the dance floor. (AP)
(Dead Tank / Pop Nihil)

DERBE LEBOWSKI – "Broken Glass" LP

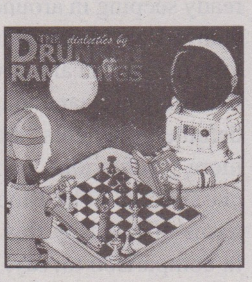
Berlin-based DERBE LEBOWSKI bash through their debut LP in stellar fashion. Kicking out jam after jam of the fast, punishing, energetic type to satisfy my mirror mosh / amped for action pre-party routine on Friday nights. These rippers blend and bend styles to achieve a seamless lineup of chaotic fastcore tracks tempered in the tight, angry fire of TRASH TALK and Graf Orlock records. Bringing a healthy dose of early Youth Attack / CHARLES BRONSON swagger to the mix adds another element to the familiar but exciting concoction these guys are stirring up. In addition to being an absolute keeper of a record, the packaging tops out as some of the best I've seen all year. Nice cardstock with a (fuckin' rad) Phillip Holldobler print on front and back, thick vinyl and black sleeve. Yes, please! (RM)
(Spastic Fantastic)

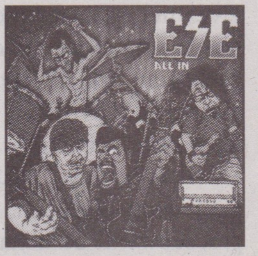
DETROIT 442 – "Pig$" LP

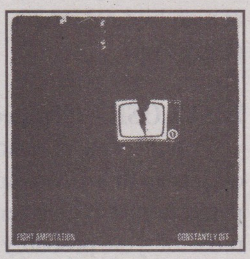
I reviewed a split with these guys a while back and I can't remember it at all. Sorry. Not their fault. I guess the singer was in Detroit legends SON OF SAM. Fuck! If you can track down their 7" from way back, do so. Some seriously damaged, fucked up shit. This is a good record. Screaming guitars and snotty vocals over some burnt-out Cass Corridor drug-fueled '70s punk. Like a brick through your mother's window, this doesn't disappoint. DEAD BOYS, DAMNED, MC5, BLIGHT, MCDONALDS. It's all here. I do have a soft spot for the Nuge even if he is an asshole. (RO)
(Hell City)

DISCHARGE – "Toronto '83: In the Cold Night" LP

Gleaned from a long-lost fan recording of the band performing at Toronto's Larry's Hideaway on November 24th, 1983, this LP captures DISCHARGE at an interesting moment in their existence. Bones had already left the band, replaced by Peter "Pooch"







THE FLATLINERS
Division of Spoils
THE FLATLINERS

Purtill, and the recently released *Warning…* 12" had indicated that the group was going in a more rock-oriented, less uncompromising direction than the earlier material. The set is a solid mix of material from *Hear Nothing See Nothing Say Nothing*, early singles and newer songs like "Where There Is a Will There Is a Way" and "The Price of Silence," but the pop-metal is already seeping in around the edges, as in the vamped-up "Anger Burning" and the clean, venom-free vocals of Cal throughout. The recording is clear enough, and the raw edge definitely benefits the record. Even the more "professional" approach can't defang classics like "The Blood Runs Red," but in terms of intensity this set absolutely pales in comparison to, say, the 1981 *Live at the Lyceum* tape. The highlight of the record is the set closing "Decontrol" when Cal gives the audience the mic for an enthusiastic sing-along. Two thumbs up for the packaging, which captures the look of the classic DISCHARGE albums and including a sweet minimalist poster that will look excellent on many a punker's wall. Plus, at the request of Pooch, some portion of the proceeds will be donated to War Child, a non-profit that provides services to children suffering due to war (check them out at warchild.ca). (AU)
(Ugly Pop)

DISCLOSE – "Tragedy" LP

I could wax philosophical, even mystical, about this record and how near absolute perfection it is in every possible way, but most of you probably know that already. DISCLOSE were, of course, the obsession and life's work of Hideki Kawakami, one of the greatest (perhaps *the* greatest) students of punk history in the world, especially as it related to DISCHARGE and the bands they influenced. Hell, the thanks list of this record by itself spawned a thousand want-lists. This reissue restores the superior early mix of the LP as it was originally released on Overthrow Records, and thank goodness for that, as the mix on the more common Your Own Jailer pressing is subpar. For those who really don't know: this is the best record early DISCHARGE never released, filtered a bit through the sensibilities of early Swedish dis-ciples like SKITSLIKERS, CRUDE SS and DISCARD. Kawakami's impeccable, scientifically designed raw guitar sound and urgent vocals lead, with a perfectly dialed-in rhythm section (yeah, that's Rainy's bass sound down to the millimeter) in support. DISCLOSE had many a finest hour, but *Tragedy* is one of the defining works, and "Conquest" in particular may be the very best DISCHARGE-inspired song ever written (only the material from the second and third ANTI-CIMEX EPs are in contention with it). If you don't have this record, get it. If you do have this record, but it's the Your Own Jailer pressing, get this. RIP Kawakami. (AU)
(La Vida Es Un Mus)

DISCLOSE – "Yesterday's Fairytale, Tomorrow's Nightmare" LP

This is a monumental record, even without considering its place as the final DISCLOSE LP released before Kawakami's passing in 2007. His death casts an enduring pall, particularly evident here in the new liner notes from Stuart Schrader. While Schrader primarily writes about the ill-fated DISCLOSE / FRAMTID tour, it is a far more insightful, nuanced and touching read than that might seem. Neither romantic nor cynical, the tone is simply reflective and personal: here are his perceptions of Kawakami's experience in the US, not a verdict but a single opinion. The epilogue of the story, over a decade later, remains ambivalent. Kawakami, despite his legacy, was still a human being irreducible to the mythos that lives on after him. The continued care and commitment shown by those that knew him and called him "friend" are a welcome palliative, showing a more grounded context to the DISCLOSE legend. In that respect, the royalties from this reissue are going to Kawakami's mother. Of course, for the vast majority of listeners, as Schrader is mindful to point out, the context is far less immediately relevant than the record itself. For those who ignore or simplify DISCLOSE as just some DISCHARGE-worship: you are missing the forest for the trees because these trees look like some other damn trees you saw in a different fucking forest. It's just not that simple, and especially not with this record. Schrader's track-by-track notes are much more compelling and attentive than anything I can comparably muster, so I won't attempt too much here. *Yesterday's Fairytale* is the pinnacle of "Disbones"-era DISCLOSE: fuzzed-out D-beat with increasingly more metallic influence in the guitar riffs. Without forsaking any of the raw energy, this style set loose the true hypnotic potential of the unrelenting beat that found its logical conclusion in the closing track "Wardead," a nearly ten-minute opus of swirling chaos and perpetual solos; a psychedelic disengagement with time, a sonic inertial assault that is simultaneously as stupefying as it is doggedly transcendent. Noise, not music. Best listened to with a foggy brain. RIP Kawakami, Kawakami forever. (SZ)
(La Vida Es Un Mus)

DISGUISE – "Signs of the Future" LP

Noisy, raw hardcore punk driven by a buzzsaw guitar and hollow drums. The thing never lets up, just feedback squalls between songs, most of which follow the short-intro-followed-by-full-on-rage formula—time tested and proven successful. DISGUISE are chaotic as shit, which is exactly what they want me to say. Success. (WN)
(Static Shock)

DIVERS – "Hello Hello" LP

Okay, this one is going to be a hard sell for the *punk* punks in our ranks, but I bet DIVERS could really give a fuck less about them. I know that these guys spent a long time recording this LP and even I was surprised by the final outcome. It's a polished, fully formed, musically proficient, confident and mature LP. I can't really avoid some obvious comparisons to SPRINGSTEEN here and there, with their songs of state lines, dusty roads, running through cornfields, running away and running free, but the band puts enough of their own voice into each song that The Boss is more of a footnote than a blueprint. "Tracks," one of the most instantly catchy songs on the LP, reminds me of the music that BENT OUTTA SHAPE or DRUNKEN BOAT (singer / guitarist Harrison's old band) would be producing now if those bands had not been consumed by the same sense of abandon that fueled them in the first place; fucking solid and catchy rock that stays with you in your heart long after the current trends and scene tourists leave the building. I've found myself flipping this one over and over in the wee morning hours, intended as background music while working on projects, but I can't stop turning it up and letting each song fill all the space in my brain. "Hello Hello" is an insanely solid, ambitious, dynamic and accomplished

LP, and live the band pulls off the frenetic energy of the CLASH…or what I imagine the CLASH was like from seeing old videos. A+. In addition to being available on LP and CD from Rumbletowne, it's also available on cassette from Stay Punk Tapes, because this is the future. (GH)
(Rumbletowne)

DOA – "Don't Turn Yer Back on Desperate Times" LP

DOA has approximately one billion records (give or take), and this one is a reissue of their 1984 12" EP originally released on Alternative Tentacles, which consists of four songs recorded as a Peel Session and that did not appear on any of their major releases beforehand. All four songs are decent, but none are essential or really fit on any of their best-known records: "General Strike" is in a wanky '70s hard rock meets Riot City sort of style; "Race Riot" is up tempo melodic punk that has less in common with the songs on *Hardcore '81* than with the SOCIAL DISTORTION and YOUTH BRIGADE songs on *Someone Got Their Head Kicked In*. The other two songs are introspective rock-influenced punk, with the first being something I might mistake for a Dischord band from around the same time if I were hearing it randomly, and the second listens like subdued, melancholy hair metal, albeit with a bit of flash in the playing. All the political sentiment is there, but without any of Joey Shithead's confident rage or party animal cockiness that oozes off their other records, and the production is far too clean. Fun fact: DOA has recently used Kickstarter to fund a record. (DG)
(Sudden Death)

DR. MARY'S MONKEY – "RedGurlBlue/Baby, Don't You Feel Alright?"

New Orleans-based generic rock / white dude blues rock band. Welp, the A-side has almost a decent early R.E.M. / CHILLS jangle-rock thing, but when you flip it over you get a '70s bar rock dung heap that even a super duper pooper scooper can't clean up. Some Jim Morrison / dollar store NEIL YOUNG mofo makes it worse by singing lines like "Gonna take a drink from your lovin' cup." (Ugh! So gross!) For a band named after a really interesting series of historical coincidences (or conspiracies if you like) via the Dave Emory's episode *Mary, Ferrie and the Monkey Virus*, this band is extremely boring. (JD)
(self-released)

THE DRUNKEN RAMBLINGS – "Dialectics" CD

This British band definitely has a RANCID / TIM ARMSTRONG thing going on but in an under-produced, almost lo-fi way. These guys would fit in fine at The Fest in Gainesville. RANCID comparisons are inevitable because of the vocal style. Six charming, tuneful songs from this West London band. (RL)
(Tiny Little Creatures)

EASTER AND THE TOTEM – "The Sum Is Greater Than Its Parts" LP

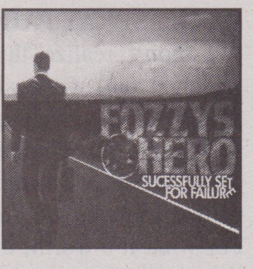
Margaret Thatcher's reign as Prime Minister might have been disastrous to Britain, but the musical legacy left in her wake almost makes it worth it. Here, we have a reissue of the second album from these under-the-radar Peel faves (who wasn't back then?). Skirting the poppier edges of post-punk, there are similarities to ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN, AZTEC CAMERA or even the SMITHS. It's the lack of sterile '80s production that renders their DIY sound raw and scratchy enough to qualify it for review in these inky pages. Makes me want to hear more. (AM)
(S-S)

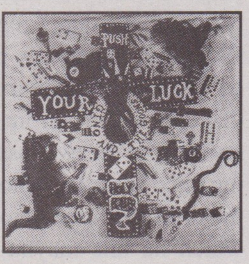
ESE – "All In" CD

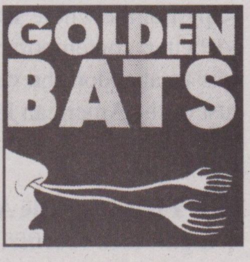
I love guacamole. It's the title of one of the twelve tracks on the CD. I would have no issue paying homage to such a delicate, delicious substance with the respect, honor and admiration that it deserves. Unfortunately not all musicians share that perspective. ESE play heavy to the right on the bar scum meter, and throughout the album lyrical offerings like, "Met her at mercado / She was buying avocados / Man, she really turned me on / She reached for my pepper / I grabbed her tomatoes / I knew it wouldn't be very long" exhaust my patience. As disappointing as it may be, ESE are offering tracks of ultra borracho, fist-pumping, LAGWAGON / Fat Mike worship that does no justice to decent guac, NAKED RAYGUN (who they cover), or Sudden Death. Let's hope everyone understands that bad guac still gets a pass but gross, horny assholes that play shitty rock fucking don't. (RM)
(Sudden Death)

THE ETHICAL DEBATING SOCIETY – "New Sense" LP

OK, so the band name is tedious, but don't let that fool you. The ETHICAL DEBATING SOCIETY runs in the same vein as FRAU, SLUM OF LEGS and POTTY MOUTH. They are self-proclaimed "Riot Pop" which has the bite of Riot Grrrl but with the soft fuzz of imperfection that comes with garage pop. Song melodies are simple, sometimes off-kilter and disjointed, with the throb of bass drum and screamy vocals keeping it raw and fresh. Faves on here are "Child's Play" and the crash and thrash of "Exxxtreme Vintage," with Side A by far the best of the two. Cover art looks like Simon Williams's (AKA Crayola) artwork in a weirdo block print. (CR)
(Odd Box)







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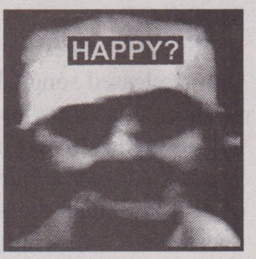


HARAMARAH
WE ARE ALL BROKEN

EXEK / SPRAY PAINT — split EP

I didn't realize this was a split until I took it out of the sleeve. I thought the EXEK track was going to be a straight-up dub reggae jam, but they throw enough layers of vocals and synth on top of the drum pattern to make it something of their own. For what it's worth, there's an inverse relationship between the circulation of this magazine and the embarrassment factor in punks doing dub / reggae music. SPRAY PAINT is America's band. They have no bassist, and the guitar has a kind of stutter that either comes from a lot of slapback delay or from the two insect-like guitarists being out of sync the whole time. I don't think the drummer owns more than one cymbal, which he hits maybe three times on this record; why bother throwing your money away on the most expensive and most fragile part of the whole setup? I could think of no better contemporary musical companions to abandon the city and sink into the dust of the American landscape. (EW)
(Homeless)

DER FIEND – "Die A-Lösung" EP

Eight-track burner…nothing here but short, sharp, fierce hardcore. But really, what else do you want? Exactly. I confess that it took a few tracks to really get this German outfit under my skin, but when the slab wrapped up with "Wollt Ihr Das?" I wanted nothing more than to flip this motherfucker over. Songs are short, recording is thick and in your face…it's fast. I mean…shit. It's a really good hardcore record. (WN)
(Bleeding Heart Nihilist Productions)

THE FLATLINERS – "Division of Spoils" CD

This is a collection of B-sides, rarities and unreleased songs. I've already become a fan of these guys based on their recordings as well as live. They have the tunes if you like raspy pop punk and there are lots of tracks that didn't make their LPs but were released as B-sides or here for the first time. This plays like a great full-length. Fans of DILLINGER FOUR and SAMIAM should check out this now established band. (RL)
(Fat Wreck Chords)

FM BATS – "Do Unto Others… Then Split" EP

I'll say this right off the bat. *Anything* with a grim reaper on it gets top priority with this reviewer. This is no exception with the grinning skeletal friend gracing the front and a big ol' rusty scythe on the back. This has some members of LE SHOK in it and one can easily imagine that with the distorted vocals and electronic effects throughout. "Do Unto Others…Then Split" is one of the better song titles in recent cloudy memory but that and the "Whiskey Dealer" song on the B-side are bad experimental art school turds. The other two, however, harken back to LUBRICATED GOAT and the BUTTHOLE SURFERS. It's one of those bands that needs to have some crazy shit going on live or an amazing stage presence; otherwise you'll be yawning and running for the door. (RO)
(Sect 503)

FOZZY'S HERO – "Successfully Set For Failure" CD

These guys are OK but they have a sound that is being done to death. In the vein of NOFX and LAGWAGON, this SoCal band really goes for that Fat sound. Big time. If you are a fanatic for these bands and need your local SoCal fix, go for it here. For me, this is just too generic to be interesting. Oddly, the whole thing ends with a keyboard and strings ballad with a guest female lead vocalist, for the EVANESCENCE and NO DOUBT crowd, I guess. (RL)
(Vacant Lot)

GAZE / KORP – split LP

First of all many thanks to the sender of this record for giving me the chance to read and hold a letter covered in rat shit written on some metal band's cheesy-as-hell poster. This record is a split between two "queer orientated" (their words) bands from Europe. GAZE kicks off the LP and fucking slays, galloping catchy riffs and reverbed as fuck vocals—shit is pretty punishing! Reminds me of Portland newbies EMASCULATOR. B-side is KORP, an equally pummeling all-female D-beat band. I wish they had translations to their songs. This record is highly recommended for all u gay ass noize freex out there. (AP)
(Byllepest / Dogs and Vultures / Imminent Destruction)

GINO AND THE GOONS – "Push Your Luck" EP

I reviewed a great 7" by these guys awhile back that was wonderfully full of piss and hate. This record finds the GOONS in a softer, fuzzier mood with full-on Vaseline on the lens. Or is that jizz? Seriously. "Push Your Luck" brings a genuine tear to the eye—a *fuck you* sappy song with the attitude of "Glad to See You Go" by the brothers RAMONE. Side two gives you a big one-two hug of love with an ode to the home state of LYNYRD SKYNYRD. A DMZ cover with that fuck BUCK BILOXI wraps it up with style. I may have to make like an old Jew and move to the Sunshine State if records like this keep coming forth. Sign me up. (RO)
(Pelican Pow Wow)

GOLDEN BATS – "Godhead/Bunny Life"

GOLDEN BATS hail from Brisbane, Australia, and despite the plural name I think this is a one-person band. Geordie Stafford has been very busy with his vision, releasing three 7"s and five digital demos since 2012. Here we have two tracks of slow heaviness, bordering on doom, but with more of a sludge metal sound, an EYEHATEGOD-meets-punk feel. I'm just going to come out and say it—I'm really into these two tracks. The vocals are pained, slow and understandable and everything takes its sweet, painful time. There are short sections where some organ/keyboards show up that work surprisingly well. EYEHATEGOD might be the wrong reference as this is more melodic and doom-y, but you get the idea. (MH)
(Coffin Cut)

HAPPY? – "Anger" EP

This felt vaguely familiar upon first listen. That feeling turned into deja vu and I had no idea why. The previous day I had been thinking about leaving San Francisco after more than a quarter of a century and was going over all the wonderful Bay Area bands I had seen over the years and thinking back to the early days of powerviolence. Aha, got it! This 7" was familiar because I had heard the vocalist many times before. HAPPY? was from Redwood City, CA, and I don't remember them ever releasing anything or playing out much. These tracks were recorded back in 1993 and the band contains members that went on to play in SPAZZ, FUNERAL SHOCK, BUG PEDALS, CANDY MUSCLE and POWER PELLUT, along with a few others. What you get is raw hardcore that is full of energy. It sounds like it was recorded live in a garage and the songs are sort of intention-

ally sloppy. These tracks were originally available on a cassette. "Biggot" is a bit faster and tighter and I love the vocals. This is a great historical release if you're interested in some fast hardcore with vague sounds of the things to come from Redwood City. Think of it as a precursor to powerviolence. (MH)
(Flinch Lumin)

HARAMARAH – "We Are All Broken" EP

This band needed to practice more and get the bass in tune with the guitar before recording. It sounds very specifically like inept Y2K thrash, like they saw WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? and picked up various 7" comps with JELLYROLL ROCKHEADS and decided to start a band to the best of their ability, though I'm sure this is far more of a coincidence / my projection than the reality. The guitar plays simple but good riffs over a drummer who sounds like he's struggling to keep up or play as fast as he wants, and a vocalist who shouts over it all. Most of the songs have fast verses and slower choruses, and they are quite predictable, but at least catchy. It has its flaws, but I like that they're unabashed. (DG)
(Global Resistance / Kibou / Orchestrated Dystopia / Runny Bum / Smegma / Urinal)

HELLMAISTROZ – "Soy El Diablo" 10"

These dudes really know how to fucking rock! Mexico's HELLMAISTROZ deliver a solid rager with this one. Some songs are driving, MOTÖRHEAD-inspired hardcore, and some are guttural crust crushers. All are a fucking blast. Sung in Spanish, with English translation. Songs are about hating society, drunken dickheads and general evil. Viva Lucifer! (BA)
(Clandestine / Cryptas / Embrace My Funeral / Exabrupto / Puerecords / TLS)

HEY HALLWAYS – "Absence Makes the Heart Forget" 12"

One thing you can say about Salinas Records is that they are reliable. Reliable in the sense that if you really like one record they put out, chances are you will like all the records they birth into this world. And if you really don't like something they've done…well, you get the idea. They make indie-power pop for kids who wear their hearts on their sleeve. Kids who aren't afraid to cry. Kids who want lyrics that are (bitter) sweet and meaningful, played to music that is catchy as hell. If you have a SWEARIN' patch on something you own, or you loved that new TRY THE PIE record, this record is mandatory. Also it should be noted that this record is a solo project (type thing) of Jason from JOYRIDE! So obviously it's gonna rule. (FS)
(Salinas)

HIBAKUSHA / HIROSHIMA NIGHTMARE – split EP

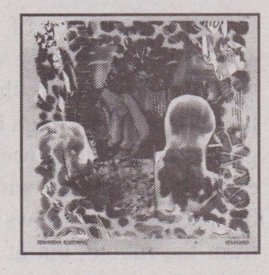
Woof, nothing like getting a record from a nearly 20-year-old band you've never heard of to keep you humble. The Czech Republic's HIBAKUSHA kick off this split with a pretty raging slab of metallic crust that's equal parts SACRILEGE and later NAUSEA, and please rest assured that I am not just citing those bands because HIBAKUSHA also have a female singer. The track peters out a bit at the end, but it's mostly a strong one, kind of a thrashed up "Cybergod" with strong, clean vocals. Fellow Czechs HIROSHIMA NIGHTMARE follow with a barrage of crusty grind that exists on a spectrum between DISRUPT and NASUM, with some gnarly breakdowns and even straight-up melodic bits that keep things punk. The recording is a bit cleaner than I like, but given how many moving parts this band has, it works for them. Solid split. (AU)
(Bazina / Cestou Na Hrbitov / Divoch Distro / DIY Piraten / GRF / Hxit Production / Killing Art / Raw Zine / Rosa Punx / Togue Sol Distribución / Ultima Ratio / Véva)

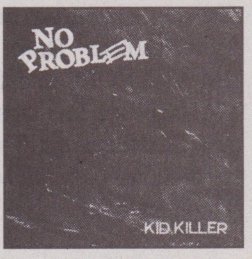
HURRY UP – LP

Kathy Foster, Westin Glass (both members of the THERMALS) and Maggie Vail (BANGS) team up for some searing hot garage in HURRY UP. Cool mix of garage, indie and dark pop, with "Pick You Up," "Guillotine," and the tight riff of "Think Again" being the most righteous of the bunch. HURRY UP tears through nine songs and leaves you wanting more. Flip! Short and sweet. (CR)
(Army of Bad Luck)

IVY – "A Cat's Cause, No Dogs Problem" EP

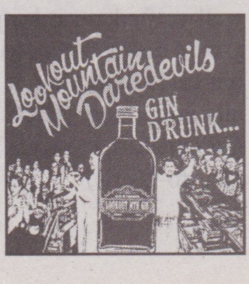
This EP ended up being IVY's premature farewell freak-off to the world and it takes everything that was great about last year's hooky, off-kilter 12" and twists it into something catchier and more compelling. No better way to go out than with songs as assertive and unique as these. I don't wanna be that dickhead talking about my "tone quest" or whatever but—the guitars! These guitars! They shimmer and squeal at the same time, washing over you while sinewy leads emerge from the haze, production cleaned up just enough for you to pick apart the parts (still plenty blown-out though, *never fear*!). Delightfully, as in the beginning of the evocatively named "Cave Business" (IVY also conducts "Head Business" and "Dow Jones' Business"), everyone seems to start in their own time before staggering into each other, then blowing apart and cohering again to stomp through a *sikk fukkn* riff. They do my favorite trick—accelerating and decelerating through the same part—better than anyone else in the game, a unit speaking in their own strangely timed tongue all at once. Meager consolation for the demise of my favorite band is the





MUSICA
Divina & Humana
LABOR CAMP

LAST SENTENCE
VOID PROTEST



fact that four-fifths of it has reconvened and reconfigured in the same practice space to form a new group, theoretically already laid to tape. I have high hopes but I also put great stock in the power of particular and explosive chemistry, which this quintet had in spades. Who knows what will emerge from the rubble, but at least we have this record to remember what was there before the fall. IVY is dead. Long live IVY. (GA)
(Katorga Works)

THE JACK BENNIES – "Chopping Down the Weeds" LP

I am hardly surprised that these guys are from Brooklyn. The first song sounds exactly like the DICTATORS. The tunes are hard rocking with punchy guitars and a low-ambition attitude. Are there really four guitarists in this band? That seems rather gratuitous. The singer alternates between sounding like Scott "Deluxe" Drake of the HUMPERS, JIM CARROLL and HANDSOME DICK MANITOBA. It is mostly by-the-book '70s punk, but there is still something interesting about the whole thing. (CK)
(Human Head)

LABOR CAMP – "Musica Divina & Humana" CD

This CD kicks things off with a belly flop bar rock song, and meanders into strange R.E.M. territory, with a pinch of the SCORPIONS, and ends with synth noise and straight-up joke-rock? The R.E.M. songs were not terrible, granted, but it stoked images of white baby boomers dancing to some street fair cover band. Fucking creepy. (CR)
(Pit-i-ful)

LÄHDÖN AIKA – "II" LP

These guys kind of sound like the slow, foreboding parts of '90s crust songs, but they never get to the D-beat. Sounds like it would be boring, but they make it work. Finland's LÄHDÖN AIKA delivers some seriously dirgy shit. They've got a NEUROSIS feel, but not so tripped out. The songs are repetitive and droning, but very well crafted, so it keeps your attention. If you're down to zone out into oblivion, give this one a spin, even if doom metal isn't really your thing. (BA)
(Doomed to Misery / Rämekuukkeli-levyt / Rusto-Osiris)

LASTSENTENCE / VOCO PROTESTA – split EP

A pairing of Japanese bands that rely heavily on distortion to mark their sound. VOCO PROTESTA comes right off with a frantic rant in Portuguese which fires into steamrolling raw D-beat. Both of their tracks speed along with the strumming hand flying at its maximum pace. LASTSENTENCE catches us off guard with an off-kilter and not-distorted guitar jab at the start of their side, but it's not too long before all the pedals get stepped on and they launch into the noisy but still catchy "Revolution." Not as catchy as FORWARD's hit of the same title, but not the same beast either. Their next track takes the "best song on the split" award for great riffs and a charging pace. I'm generally not really into the raw distort-y thing, especially because these days it seems like bands go into decent studios and basically degenerate their sounds rather than creating a genuinely raw recording based on their limited resources. I do, however, find the quality of songs on here to be high and think it's a cool record. (MA)
(Doomed to Extinction)

LIGHT SCREAMER – "BFJ/Sugary"

Sludgy, psyched-out, post-rocky release from a couple of Swedes. Only two songs on this—first track is "BFJ," a drenching wall of sound serving as a backdrop for drone-like buzzed-out guitar. The B-side is a cover of "Sugary" by Austin's CHERUBS. Punk veering into post-metal has never been an area of musical knowledge or interest for me but this is a heavy release nonetheless. (AP)
(self-released)

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN DAREDEVILS – "Gin Drunk/Nova SS"

I'm pretty partial to Southern Rock so I'll always give crap like this an honest listen. These folk call Tennessee home but I'll take a good Kentucky bourbon over that sour mash garbage any day of the week. The title track owes a lot to KISS (they *love* KISS in the South...whatever) and the B-side is the typical sped-up CHUCK BERRY riff. Blah. The titles and lyrics are *sooo* typical and mundane, crawling along like a wounded possum down the proverbial Southern road. It's downright painful. I'm sure like most Southerners, they're sweet warm people but...shit...I don't have time for this jack. (RO)
(Mystery School)

MALOS TIEMPOS BASTARDOS – "Amona Saralegui" CD

Listening to this record makes me feel like one of the characters in *Hot Tub Time Machine*, but instead of being transported to the '80s or the American Revolution, I was sent to CBGB's in the mid '90s to an OXYMORON / CASUALTIES show where MALOS TIEMPOS BASTARDOS were opening. This band is a shoo-in for GMM Records 20 years ago. This record has everything: the sing-alongs, the ska part, the unapologetic melody. This record is *really, really* good if you ever remember liking *American Pie* by the ANTI-HEROES. I was definitely tapping my toes the entire time. For fans of forgetting where you parked, seeing old friends, the Riptide (RIP). (MW)
(Bird Trouble / Musikooperatiba Punks Y Skins / Petruska / Riot-Kids / Skizo Diskak)

MAMA – "Night Shoot" 2x7"

Not the tribute to early '80s GENESIS's proto-doom song (uh, look it up). Instead this is some real solid CHEAP TRICK / TELEVISION-influenced power pop in a neat-lookin' box set. "25 Forever" is so damn power poppy you're magically fitted into a striped shirt. The title track is very up-tempo with a good message: "Never pay your rent / Get back what you spent!" While this is totally radio-ready (in the best way possible), lyrically they're in CRASS territory. "Street Angles" is the best song TELEVISION never wrote. Unlike some early power pop there're no soft guitars on this. They're putting the *power* into the power pop. No teen idol moves whatsoever! You can leave the "is this 'Modern City Rock?'" debate to the *Terminal Boredom* forum dudes, I s'pose. Totally worthwhile! (JD)
(Automatic)

MANIAC – "Demimonde" LP

When I first put this LP on the turntable, the music immediately reminded me of the BRIEFS. Then I see MANIAC has members from CLOROX GIRLS, the GIRLS and the CUTE LEPERS. Close enough. As expected this is super-slick poppy punk. The songs are extremely catchy, almost annoyingly so. The singer sounds bratty. The bass and drums are loud. If you like that type of stuff, you'll love this record. If you don't, you'll hate it. You decide. (CK)
(La-Ti-Da)

MASKED INTRUDER – "Incriminating Evidence: 2011 Demos" EP

Dude, you fucked up! You slept in on Record Store Day 2015 and missed your chance to get the MASKED INTRUDER *Demos* 7" featuring one song not available on other releases! Could this be the most produced demo of all time? I'll let you be the judge of that. Pop pop pop pop pop pop punk madness. (FS)
(Red Scare)

MIDGETMEN – "Hobbytown!" LP

With equal parts pop punk, old age, beer, slop, love of Todd Congelliere, and then some more beer, these (I'm assuming) older punk dudes ain't breaking any new ground, or blowing any minds, but they are just buzzed enough to be perfectly slightly sloppy and have just a touch of the best parts of dude-punk. And they seem pretty genuine! I'd do a couple shots with these Austin nerds. Hell, they covered *Dare To Be Stupid* (although quite sloppily) in its entirety, so I'm technically obligated to like them. There's just a little bit too much rock'n'roll worship here for me to sing their praises, though, but it's tight enough to merit a few more spins. On a mixtape, I'd put this in between that one KISS song that you never told anybody made you cry, and practically any of the finely crafted BILLY REESE PETERS songs on their side of the split with GRABASS. (DZ)
(self-released)

MISCHIEF BREW – "This Is Not For Children" LP

Jeez, I wanna root for this band but I just *can't*. Folk punk just falls on its collective, ripped panted ass every time. The crux of this LP does this as well. But to be fair, "Bad Heart" had some decent, non-barfy pop punk / radio rock hooks. Also, I dug the very Philly accent when he sings about "wooter" ("water") and their pro-union / working class sentiments. But then they make me wanna hurl with the title track, which is very SOCIAL DISTORTION-y with a stupid-ass chorus that goes "Lie-lie-lie" as if they're the folk-punk SIMON & GARFUNKEL. Recommend for: squatter / train hopper kids that hang outside anarchist book fairs, political-minded Punk Rock Bowling bros, and any of you "Bakunin Springsteens." (JD)
(Alternative Tentacles)

MODERNETTES – "Teen City" 12"

Can you believe I've never heard this, the first LP (er, six-song EP), from the legendary Canuck power pop trio outta Vancouver circa 1979? Around the time I decided I really needed to investigate this one, the price of an original topped $100, and sadly for me, it's held that value for well over a decade. Amazing it's taken this long for a vinyl reissue to happen—it's about frickin' time! Great power pop LP, punkier than most of their wussed out Stateside late '70s contemporaries gunning for radio play, but also showing off some soaring pop sensibilities on cuts like "Confidential" with a *Shake Some Action*-era FLAMIN' GROOVIES feel. The female backing vox also give it a refreshing sound for the era. Great packaging recreates the original, only with a barcode. Highly recommended, especially if classic power pop or '70s punk is your shit. (GB)
(Sudden Death)

MR. CLIT AND THE PINK CIRARETTES – "Wet-Willy" 10"

What a dumbass band name. Seriously. This comes from a man who was once in a band called SOUNDGARBAGE. This is pretty middle-of-the-road, slightly garagey punk with silly song lyrics. The main vocalist does this annoying screamy thing like Bobcat Goldthwait that just sucks. The other (female?) vocals are quirky like the VAGEENAS. Good points for their solid driving drum beats, handclaps and rhythm. There's a long blank spot before the last song, which is a cover. Like I'm supposed to care. (RO)
(Heel Turn)

NEGATIVE SCANNER – LP

The brilliant promise of that first NEGATIVE SCANNER single was the way it oscillated between moody, off-kilter rhythmic trance and classic "Moon Over Marin"-style hookiness, and I guess they could have gone either way with their full-length. It seems like they mostly stuck with the latter, which was the one disappointment in my first go-around with this record. Maybe I'm just more rhythmically inclined, so don't let my personal temperament steer you away. If anyone ever tells you that Chicago is a zero-tracks kind of town (everyone's an expert since Martin moved away from the *MRR* compound), you can tune them in to "Would You Rather" (it's incredible) or "Ivy League Asshole" after you name-check the EFFIGIES. Something about the way the guitarists play here is really forcing me to make my first WIPERS comparison in my career as an *MRR* reviewer (I was hoping to make it at least ten issues before this happened). Specifically it reminds of that eerie *Youth of America*-era open-chord type of sound, an undertapped vein of inspiration. The beginning of "Forget It" has this incessant chime that gets cut through by an underlying guitar line that sounds like a cello or something. The winding and cresting surf guitar riff that opens up "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning" is just sick; it's raw, it's classic. One thing really ties it together here: Rebecca Valeriano-Flores is an utterly devastating lyricist with a powerfully understated delivery, a *tuff* singer. All you other so-called songsmiths out there: step it up. More and more uncanny details come up as I spend more time with these songs. This

MASKED INTRUDER

PEARS
GO TO PRISON

one is either a winter record dropped in the wrong time of year or a summer record for that point late at night in a hot city when you realize you can't stand it outside any longer. Backed. (EW)
(Trouble in Mind)

NERVOSAS – LP

Oh my fucking god, I wish this record had a lyric sheet! NERVOSAS return with the always-dreaded second LP and manages to not blow it. You can chalk this success up to solid songwriting, over-the-top musicianship from every member, and a truckload of energy in every song. They do that dark punk / chorus pedal / WIPERS-influenced thing *super* well…but don't call it goth! They make every song interesting and memorable. I've always thought that this band was excellent live, but left something to be desired when it came to their recordings, but this LP has me changing my tune. If you're feeling fatigued from the current onslaught of dark punk that might as well be lumped in with JOY DIVISION and wanna just get back to losing your mind to sick ass punk bands, you'll wanna track down this LP. No weak moments. All tracks. Plus, their drummer used to play in GAUNT sometimes and he's probably one of the best drummers in punk today. (GH)
(Dirtnap)

NERVOUS MOTHERS – "Nest" EP

NERVOUS MOTHERS is an apt name. If I was a parent I would be nervous if I caught my kid listening to this. Or, more likely, I would wonder why my kid was listening to an algebra lesson on vinyl. I feel like the start / stop, abrasive, post-CONVERGE trend is alive and well in Europe—this band is from Germany. There also seems to be a heavy dose of CURSED worship, especially in the vocal delivery. The songs are nowhere near as long but the guitar work is dramatic, utilizing open strings and single-note picking parts. Lyrically, this record veers toward the nihilistic. Themes include: humans are the problem ("Pillage"), we are consumers ("Collapse"), and our cities are false idols ("Work"). Generally, these are things most punks can agree on (as long as you don't take away my iPhone!). For fans of the IWW, working at your local DIY bike shop, cooking risotto for touring bands. (MW)
(Quiet Days)

NIET – "Srečna Mladina" LP

Extensive reissue of this 1984 cassette-only album from NIET, a Yugoslavian group that went on to incite a sort of "mania" in their land. I must declare prior ignorance to NIET's existence, but I sure am glad that stops now. Packaged within a giant 24-page book of photos, interviews, notes, lyrics, and tales (all with English translations) are 21 tracks that present a band with two distinct personalities. The A-side shows a more somber, melancholic, cold pogo, a séance triggered by its catchy vocal hooks and some of the most chilling, funerary guitar leads this side of the great hereafter. In contrast, the B-side offers up several quick bursts of bouncy, thrashing, raw hardcore rage. Absolute punk. Absolute atmosphere. (JU)
(NE!)

NO – "Big Surprise/The Crash"

This Philly band is pretty nice mid-pace, rockin' punk. Lots of steady tempos. For some reason they remind me of a modern taken on the BIG BOYS (sans the funk inspiration), the DICKS (minus the overt political attitude) and LAZY COWGIRLS. "The Crash" is a real ripper of speedy punk and call-and-response vocals. Sure, the vox are a bit odd in places (like when the singer goes "cryyah" like James Hetfield) and their boogie rock moment was weird, but it all works more often than not. (JD)
(No Universe / Savage Era)

NO PROBLEM – "Kid Killer" EP

NO PROBLEM's prior efforts summoned visions of bored, fed-up adult punks reared on Frontier Records and similar sounds, who may be too old for teen angst but whose feelings of alienation have not withered with time. The previous vibe is still present, but this time is matched with a dark, defeated feeling, and world-closing-in melodies that complement the songs of paranoia and isolation. "The Killing Game" is characterized by a shimmering guitar riff that happens to be the same single-note riff as REAGAN YOUTH's "New Aryans," and hovers over most of this frantic song. "Eyes of ISIS" is a bit faster and more reminiscent of their earlier, more straightforward stuff. "Never See the Sun" is a descent into living in darkness, and invoking the same feeling as the AGENT ORANGE song of that name (even if a direct sonic comparison doesn't apply), only more desperate, ending with a random muted bass note and no resolve. This is their best record so far, and each of the three songs stands on their own. (DG)
(Deranged)

NORTHERN LIBERTIES – "Errant Ray" LP

Whoa...fuuuck. Some pretty minimalist-yet-fierce art punk here. Super dark three-piece consisting of merely drums, bass and kinda wild vocals. Silk-screened covers and badass artwork (and lyrics) bordering on doom and despair complete the package. This has the energy to kill it in a basement, the disparity to keep the post-punks' attention, and freakish enough to keep all the squares just a few steps back. Like maybe if LIGHTNING BOLT slowed down to a super-duper primal level and was quite sure the universe was about to collapse and crush us all at any given moment. This is pretty tight! More, please. (DZ)
(self-released)

OTDEL SAMOISKORENENIA – "Антивсё (Полное Досье 1981–1984)" 2xCD

Legendary underground Soviet punk band Отдел Самоискоренения (translated: Department of Self-Eradication) started long before the slow loosening of the iron fist in the USSR, and were treated accordingly, which means they were persecuted for their strong political stances before they ever even played as show. This compilation is two full discs of nasal vocals and an off-kilter, angular punk delivery slowing morphing into a band which is as comfortable cranking out STOOGES-esque dirges and accidental no wave improvisations as they are with straight-ahead, driving punk…. though their version of even simple punk comes from a different place on the map (literally and figuratively). 30 tracks in all, and the collection is brilliantly packaged with images and words (in Russian, of course) spanning the band's history. I suggest digging through the *MRR* online archives for a review of the first Отдел Самоискоренения live show in 2014, which provides more background that I could intelligently give…and I strongly recommend hunting down this set of discs for both historical, reference and listening pleasure. (WN)
(Syanie)

PEARS – "Go to Prison" CD

I mean…it's fast and aggressive and some of the riffs are pretty sick. It's like '80s US hardcore punk on steroids (not speed, *steroids)*…but infected with an incurable case of '90s pop punk. All of the things I want are here, but I feel like they've been polluted. It's fast and erratic, it's full-on in your face the whole time, and "Sycophant" is an actual burner without a hook in sight…but somehow even that song is palatable. That's the thing…there's no teeth. It's really good, it just feels safe. Like you could take your mom to see them and she would think they seemed like nice boys. The "Judy Is a Punk" cover seals it for me though—this shit is too friendly. Even when "Little Bags" (probably the toughest song on the disc) comes in, there isn't anything that makes me believe these fellows mean business. There's just nothing there, but it's all really good—does that even make sense? (WN)
(Fat Wreck Chords)

PERMANENT MAKEUP – "Taker" LP

This record is kind off-kilter and a little sloppy but totally on purpose. It relies heavily on the drum / bass groove with a lot of transient guitar lines that float over that core. It's then topped by aggressive talked / yelled vocals. It's sort of jerky, it's sort of in the vein of the BIG BOYS, sort of post-punk (though who the hell knows what that means anymore!) but it doesn't sound old. The problems: it might be too sloppy and it sounds a bit disconnected musically (I blame that on the mix, which really separates everything like a slick-sounding record would, although there is nothing slick about this). There are totally highlights. The last song, "Structure" absolutely kills it. The initial bass and guitar lines are great as is but then the angry vocal talking part really gives it the edge that the song needs. This may not work as a whole record and the songs could really be tightened up a bit but there are some gems here and a good amount of this is totally worth your while. (PA)
(No Clear)

PRETTY HURTS – "Make Graves" 12"

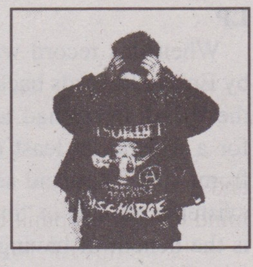
So, late last year, some Berlin dudes put out a tape, and now you can get it as a one-sided LP. PRETTY HURTS are purveyors of an interesting and fluid mix of some popular punk styles. The first three songs on this six-song record are up-tempo, gloomy, MARKED-MEN-style 16th-note pop punk (oh shit, I guess that just means the WIPERS?). These songs are dominated, at least in this mix, by the relentless and churning bass. Everything else is audible, but markedly underneath the bass in the mix. This gives these first tracks a very quick feel, and, due to the relatively uniform rhythm mixed with the speed, the three could easily become one in your mind without close listening. The third track is the one that breaks out of that rut, with its stomping, mid-tempo, heavy, all-down-beat drumming and noodley emo guitar taking more of a lead. This lends a strong feel of structure to the record, but leaves me feeling like I should be flipping the record over, not just listening to six songs. This is probably nitpicking, and punks will always tell you one should be left wanting more rather than drowning in too much. I just can't say that I feel super good about it this particular time. "Moving Fast," the fifth track, is likely the standout of the group, placing them in the company of blackened-emo-grinders like CLOUD RAT or REPUBLIC OF DREAMS. While not a particularly violent number, the fast tempo and similar stylistic drawings of emo and more traditional hardcore will please someone who finds value in the aforementioned bands. This song is also mixed slightly differently and manages to incorporate the feel of both the first three WIPERS-feeling songs with the stomping Euro-emo of the fourth track. It's brooding, fast, and considerably noisier, with its muffled vocals and guitar competing for space in the mix. Unfortunately, it is ultimately undercut by the sixth and final track on the record, which manages to marry the theatrical nature of modern deathrock / punk compositions (complete with flanged guitar) with a prime example of the ridiculousness of angsty emo lyrics. Ultimately, it's ridiculous, and the fact that the previous track bleeds into the last one only goes to show that you can meld the things you love in both a good way and a bad way. This is a record as ridiculous as its name said all together, but it is organized well as an album, if a bit short, and shows solid songwriting promise. A good demo, but I am not a fan of flashy vinyl represses of demos. I would rather have just waited for the proper album. (LP)
(Rockstar)

RADIOACTIVITY – "Silent Kill" LP

Part of me wants to find the review for the last RADIOACTIVITY LP and just copy 'n' paste it here. Not that they are identical records, but the similarities are endless. Just like all MARKED MEN records kinda sound the same, I have a feeling all RADIOACTIVITY records will end up sounding the same. But at the same time, this is not a negative comment in the slightest. If you're like me, you can't get enough of this stuff. When you've found the perfect pop punk formula, why try to change it?! Does a heroin addict ever get bored of their favorite stuff?! Never. Will the pogo addict ever get bored of RADIOACTIVITY?! Hell no! I hope these guys continue to rehash this same style over and over, record after record. I'll want them all plugged straight into my vein. (FS)
(Dirtnap)

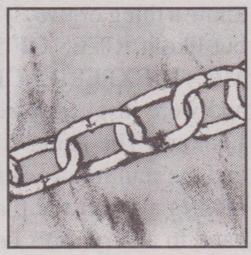
REDGURL BLUE
DR. MARY'S MONKEY

SADS
tele vision sect
BREAKOUT RECORDS
military madness



Shark Inferno

SHORTS
RINO



ASHLEY REAKS – "This Is Planet Grot" CD

Our man ASHLEY plays guitars, bass and sings on this effort. Another chap does the drumming. Between 'em, they come up with the best album that the PIXIES never recorded in their basement. Triumphant rock'n'roll with some fantastic, chiming guitar riffs. Lyrics are definitely about the dark end of the tower block, but the music sounds so damn uplifting and anthemic, like SUGAR without the shiny pop. Don't suppose anyone remembers the mighty FALLOUT from 30-plus years ago, but this reminds me of those dizzying heights. FALLOUT and ASHLEY are, of course, both from the UK. (RK)
(self-released)

REATARDS – "Grown Up, Fucked Up" LP

When this record was originally issued by Empty Records back in 1999, it felt like the REATARDS had already been around for a decade, at least (their first single is from '97). The band seemed to jump into existence already in "mature phase," which is the benefit of having a true maniac creative like Jay crafting your songs. It's great to now slide back into the shitty, shitty, shitty, shitty, shitty, *shitty* pile of emotional bile that the best REATARDS tracks evoke, and realize the ability it confers, upon first needle drop, to discern fake punk from the real thing. It's always going to be present on this record, the best full-length Jay Reatard ever pulled off. So, it still holds up as one of the ten best punk LPs of the decade, and the best '90s party bummer LP I own outside of the BAD TIMES LP, and hey! Look who's all over *that* fucker too. (RW)
(Goner)

SAID GUN – "Control" LP

SAID GUN is from Phoenix, and rep Arizona pretty hard. Which, of course, makes me think "there must be something wrong with these guys." But, after listening to this record all the way through for the first time, I recognized it's pretty good, so maybe they know a thing or two. It's pop punk for sure, but like if RITES OF SPRING discovered MR. T EXPERIENCE in the mid '90s and were inspired to reform and sign with Lookout. The guitar riffs are super catchy and the multiple vocals are layered in harmonies all over the place. Add seeing this band to a very short list of reasons to visit Phoenix. And add buying this record to a very long list of reasons to visit the internet. There're only 100 copies. (FS)
(self-released)

SEEIN' RED – "Riot" EP

I guess this is SEEIN' RED's final recording, and that is a shame, because these songs are more than worth standing in line for. Despite having done a few different styles of hardcore over their 25-year existence, they end on a fast, pissed, straight-ahead note, with a good deal of instrumental breaks for good measure. Years of experience have clearly provided them with the ability to write blazing fast songs that have hooks and direction, and those that are a notch or two below top speed are equally good, with a drummer that frequently switches things up but never lets up. For whatever reason, the recording doesn't have a lot of treble, but it's not to any detriment. I seriously can't think of another hardcore band who is writing music this good after a quarter century of existing, which is a major accomplishment. Sad I never got to see them. (DG)
(Way Back When)

SEWERS – "Weight" LP

Swaggering yet sniggering Orstralian noise rawk; repetitive and moronic, catchy sludge you can gargle with! The guitars hit somewhere between CIRCUS LUPUS and VENOM P. STINGER. The vocalist snarls and sneers and sounds like he is laughing at you, then talking though you, it's a constant rant, a rhythm-free Mark E. Smith rollercoaster of relentlessness. Something about this is sort of carefree rather than dissolute? A record made out of good times rather than desperate times, thru the sludge there's a fuck you glint of rugged glee. I really enjoyed listening to this, then I got bored, then I would get back into it, but it felt like my life was passing me by. It's a cool record, like some punks discovered the EASTER MONKEYS and Amphetamine Reptile, and certain songs are great, but something about the endless dude swagger got dull. They're no LOW LIFE or WATERY LOVE, you know? (LG)
(Homeless)

SHARK INFERNO – "Puncture" CD

Man. I don't really know where to go with this. They're from the Netherlands so maybe there's an excuse in there. This is a two-piece Dutch grunge band. They have songs about Emma Peel and Fred "Sonic" Smith. There's horrible tweaker computer collage artwork for every song. The CD luckily has six additional songs so there's a lot of artwork to enjoy. Like your average grunge band, there are the good moments that sound like the STOOGES or MC5 and the mostly bad moments that sound like TEMPLE OF THE DOG. I'm trying to stay positive here. Can you tell? Therapy. Dog shit. (RO)
(self-released)

THE SHORTS – "Rino" CD

Eight-track, sixteen-and-a-half-minute effort from this power trio from rural Oz. Not as melodic or power pop / melodic hardcore as SNUFF, but they do remind me of 'em a lot, mebbe just 'cause the drummer is the lead singer, and they have a great guitar sound and layered vocals. I guess more like ALL covering SNUFF's more off-kilter efforts. (RK)
(Red Gum)

SOCIALITE – "I See You/I Don't Care"

In a swirl of blown-out, noisy bursts of melody and spite, we are introduced to SOCIALITE via the ever-enigmatic Jade Tree Records. These five tracks are gritty and mean, holding strong on a sort of '90s slacker vibe without the pretension of amplifying any specific influence. Putting the band firmly in the company of recent Philadelphia notables such as the criminally underrated LEATHER and the not-forgotten CLOCKCLEANER, this debut EP knocked my socks off. It shares the massive chip on the shoulder most of these jawns do, along with the unique caliber of gritty punk. SOCIALITE has quickly become one of Philly's top exports. Next bedroom DJ sesh, this platter is going to tone things down after VILE GASH only to tie right into a TOTAL ABUSE tangent, before letting WICCANS bring it home. Full-length in the works. (RM)
(Jade Tree)

SODS – "Television Sect/Military Madness"

A reissue of the second-tier (but still great!) punk band SODS's 1979 single. From Denmark—a good sign. B-side "Military Madness" borders on hardcore in style and lyrics. Basic early punk that you've heard a million times before and could hear a million times again. Good reissue, Brace likes it. (BB)
(Breakout)

SPRAY PAINT – "Punters on a Barge" LP

For some reason, Austin's SPRAY PAINT has passed me by until now, despite being around for a few years. Their meandering, atmospheric post-punk borrows from a raft of predecessors; I hear shards of DOG FACED HERMANS, a little BIG BLACK here and there. Is pigfuck back? At the end of the day, their ruptured, splintering sound could illustrate a timeline of Texan avant-garde noise punk, from SCRATCH ACID at one end to MANIKIN at the other. (AM)
(Homeless)

STEREOTYPIA – "Kauniit Ja Rohkeat" EP

Four-song debut vinyl release for this Finnish quintet. Dynamic, political and melodic, yet hard to pin down (or should I say stereotype) as pop punk. I would instead hazard a guess that members of STEREOTYPIA have played in (or at least deeply admire) hardcore and D-beat rock'n'roll bands. Finnish punk references don't immediately come to mind when I jam this, but rather a late-'80s Polish vibe and the venerable BURNING KITCHEN. The vinyl is handsomely packaged with original artwork including all the Finnish lyrics with English translations. Lyrical content ranges from immigrant and animal rights to resisting ideological state apparatuses. I am digging this more with every listen. Much recommended for fans of POST REGIMENT and SJU SVARA AR. (LT)
(self-released)

STRASBOURG — "Fruit De La Passion" LP

This is one of those records that conveys the same vibe on 33 or 45. I'm pretty sure it's a long player, but you can brood and shake the dandruff out of your head at either speed, I think. Not sure what the instrumentation is here, but there is definitely that *Isn't Anything*-era MY BLOODY VALENTINE guitar squall going on over repetitive drum machine beats. I imagined an all-male, French SCREEN VINYL IMAGE, but this is actually a four-piece including a woman on violin. I wouldn't have guessed it, the violin / synth sound is all over the place, sounding like a foot organ on one track, some freaky snake charmer's horn the next. It's a noble project, building on VELVET UNDERGROUND and SUICIDE instrumentation to create alternate punk futurities. These are clearly not a couple of schmucks who picked up a Korg MS20 and an SP404 and decided to try and put out an Ascetic House tape or some shit. It wouldn't be out of place on a Born Bad reissue comp (or new release for that matter), but these fools are doing it in Bordeaux, hopefully sharing bills with raw D-beat bands. STRASBOURG establishes a lot of different tones and tempos over the eight tracks of this LP, so while the dungeon rave room is pretty consistent it never feels too "samey." I'm writing this review at noon and the sun is out so it may not be the right time to articulate the moonlit night sensations contained herein. Suffice to say I'd go to the clubs a lot more if they played tracks like these, and if I weren't as likely to run into my ex-coworkers at DNA Lounge goth night. (EW)
(Le Turc Mecanique)

SUFFER DAMAGE – LP

DISCHARGE songwriting formula re-reinterpreted by Belgian crusters means you get a monstrosity of thunderous, lurching D-beat madness. Far from a chaotic noise assault, this is powerful (if formulaic) hardcore punching you in the face over and over and over (and over) again. The verse is the left hook and the chorus is the right hook and you just keep sticking your face in there for more. Because it's what you want. (WN)
(Vulle Pulle)

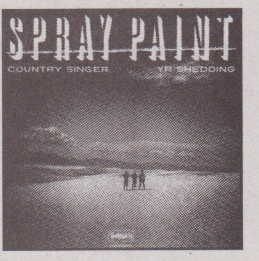
TENTÁCULO – "Tiro En La Sien" EP

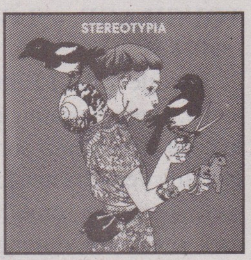
Southern Spain is a formidable force in contemporary punk production and should not be overlooked. I sense an admirable camaraderie between many of the bands, who share the common goal of keeping punk alive in the region. Another worthy example is Seville's TENTÁCULO, a three-piece that plays unapologetic rock'n'roll punk, with ample sing-alongs and a galloping mid-tempo that reminds me of LOS MONJO. The lyrics deal with living life on your own terms and also delve into tongue-in-cheek provocation towards Catholic folklore. I don't want to just assume that new Spanish punk bands always draw their influences from the old ones, but I swear I hear KGB and TNT on this one. For fans of LA URSS and RULETA RUSA. I'm just going to put it out there that this would be a good time for that Andalusia scene report. Any takers? (LT)
(Andalucía Über Alles / Menos Folklore Más Hardcore)

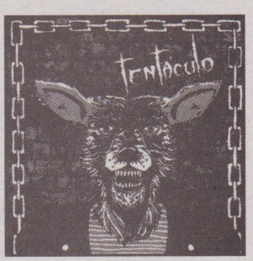
TERRIBLE FEELINGS – "Tremors" LP

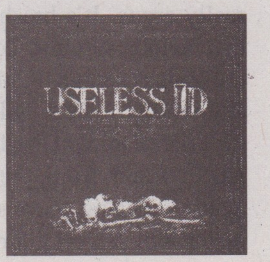
Sorry, but is this soft rock? I seem to remember this band having more of a sense of urgency. OK, we all need to evolve and our taste and our musicianship can mature. I'm totally on board with that narrative, but I hear no guts in their sophomore album. I just hear the same song over and over again with the same predictable melodies, tempos, progressions and arrangements. With the exception of the first track, there aren't any riffs or lines that grab me. I also think it's severely over-produced. I'm totally into studio production qualities that enhance energy or mood, but the production on here just gives it a safe, washed-out feel. Fans of their previous stuff may automatically enjoy this. I like a few of their older songs and thought they were cool live, but I'm not into this record. (MA)
(Deranged)

SPRÄCKTA SNUTSKALLAR
CRACKED COP SKULLS
Ep!!
COMPLETE UNCENSORED
EVERY STONE I THROW









THE TOSSPINTS – "The Privateer" CD

Never heard of these folks before (not saying much about anything, really), but this is their fourth LP. It's hailed as "Celtic punk," but fortunately, certainly as far as I'm concerned, there's none of that faux discovering-my-roots-with-a-brace-of-fiddles-and-bagpipes nonsense. Indeed, only one track has any nod to "folk" instrumentation, and that's not so bad. The other nine are certainly angst-ridden rock songs (some at a fair clip) that are more indie rock than hardcore (which is fine by me). Fronted by a vet, there's plenty of wordage covering being fucked by war and its aftermath. Raw, but not overwrought. Rather excellent all round. (RK)
(self-released)

TOUGH AGE – "I Get the Feeling Central" LP

The title of this LP doesn't make any sense to me. I keep repeating it over and over again in hope that I'll hear some pun or something. Nothing yet. The music is poppy alternative rock. There are some '80s and '90s college rock sensibilities along with some modern garage stylings. The mishmash keeps it interesting. However, it is a bit too serious for my tastes. (CK)
(Mint)

UH BONES – "Honey Coma" LP

I really liked the lo-fi charm of UH BONES's debut EP. It had a laid-back, unassuming garage rock moderne sound. For this LP, the recording is a bit slicker. The vocals sound a lot like the BLACK LIPS, whiny with a bit of attitude. The music however remains relatively lo-fi. If it wasn't for those vocals and the lyrics of the opening track "In Your Womb," I'd probably like this a lot more. (CK)
(Randy)

UNFIT SCUM / VIHARIKOS – split LP

Fight Records describes VIHARIKOS as one of the few current Finnish bands playing the early '80s Finnish style, and I can't really argue. It's brash and abrasive, even the melodies sound cold and they *nailed* the guitar sound. Punk as absolute fukk, and wholly inaccessible by design. On the flip, São Paulo's UNFIT SCUM does their name proud from the first screech, lo-fi chaos focusing more on punishment that distortion. A total churn of speed riffs and howling vocals and everything in the red… nothing artificial here except the alcohol… and it sounds like there's a lot of it. A touch of DOOM / EXTREME NOISE TERROR, but a heaping dose of classic raw Brazilian power (emphasis on the "raw"). Excellent split. (WN)
(Fight)

URANIUM CLUB – "Human Exploration" 12" EP

Jangly, quirky modern punk rock with post-punk sensibilities: scratchy, trebly guitars, herky-jerky rhythms, distracted vocals. But also: recognizable tunes, riffs, e.g. "songs." Maybe a little like KILLER DREAMER meets older DEVO or something. I mean, they didn't just come up with a cool sound and record an LP, skipping the part where you actually write songs. It sounds elementary but it happens. This is good. (AM)
(Fashionable Idiots)

USELESS I.D. – "The Last Broken Bones" CD

Pretty slick, overproduced, fancy, Fat-styled stuff. Unfortunately, almost all the bands on this label give me the same sick feeling...like they're trying to craft the perfect heavy-yet-melodic pop song to get put on an iTunes commercial or movie soundtrack. In the mid '90s, I remember being stoked that a punk band from Israel was coming through my sleepy town, but USELESS I.D. seemed then, as this CD seems now, to be yet another victim of a shitty generic song generator. Oh hey, the lyrics aren't total shit, though. (DZ)
(Fat Wreck Chords)

VACANT LIFE – "Pain Compliance" EP

Another off-kilter take on good ol' American hardcore punk from your overlords at Iron Lung, and you can consider me a quick convert to the church of VACANT LIFE. Starting from a foundation of serious fucking *riffs*, there're some awesome curveballs to keep things interesting. Just when you think you're in for some meat-and-potatoes hardcore, they pull out a disjointed, almost goth / post-punk breakdown, and somehow totally pull it off. Things get sludged out towards the end, without losing any of the energy built up on the previous tracks. This is fucking on-point, plain and simple, and I'll definitely be keeping an eye on these ones. (WB)
(Iron Lung)

THE VAPIDS – "Punitive Damage" EP

The VAPIDS are a Canadian band that started in the '90s and survived through most of the following decade before breaking up in 2009. Now they are back with some new recordings. This EP contains three songs of melodic sensitive tough guy rock. Slowing and dumbing down the RAMONES sound without a new perspective makes for a rather lackluster record. Unfortunately the songs aren't catchy enough to catch you on the nostalgia trip, either. (CK)
(Surfin' Ki)

VHS – "Choking on the Fruit" EP

After a couple of stellar tapes, Seattle / Reno's VHS have finally thrown a few of their songs on vinyl. They take some influences from the WIPERS and early JAY REATARD, but forge ahead using their own flourishes so that they don't sound like copycats. All three of the songs on here are *dense* with guitars and synth…there's a lot going on behind the scenes in each one. I keep finding new things with repeated listening. Their singer has some hint of Guy Picciotto (from FUGAZI) in his voice that I've never noticed before, but all comparisons end there. All three songs are pretty straightforward and direct on this release, with less dynamics and tension than their earlier tapes, but this isn't a bad thing. Another excellent release from this band and I'm interested to see what they do in the future. (GH)
(Carbonated Sounds / Casino Trash)

WAND – "Machine Man/M.E."

I saw this trio play very early on the bill at last year's Burger Boogaloo fest. Their modern and poppy (yet often heavy) psych rock isn't too different from what I heard then. If you could imagine a somewhat less-noisy GODHEADSILO mixed with early-era DUNGEN (*en English, inte Svensk*), with some fuggin' HAWKWIND and ETERNAL TAPESTRY thrown in, you'd get a fine 7" like this. Oh yeah, the B-side is a nice cover of the ol' GARY NUMAN track. (JD)
(In the Red)

WARWOUND – "A Huge Black Cloud: The Demos 1983" CD

WARWOUND disbanded when the rhythm section was recruited to join VARUKERS in '83, but they managed to crank

out three killer recordings before they did. First-wave UK hardcore, slightly more metallic (especially on the second demo) than DISCHARGE and VARUKERS at the time, but definitely following the songwriting formula for both. Speed is omnipresent on the last two demos and the tracks go by in a blur, but the first recording shows the band struggling to maintain their pace, giving those eight tracks a definite edge). These tapes made the rounds for years, glad to see them getting a proper issue. (WN)
(Boss Tuneage)

RENNY WILSON – "Punk Explosion/Extension" LP

RENNY WILSON is a Canadian punk who has been in a couple garage bands, including PUNK EX, which seems to be his band / project. He also has a squeaky voice that sounds like some kind of extremely punk child. It's not as annoying as it sounds, as it lends some extra snot to these songs, but it is odd enough that it bears mentioning. These songs are mostly garage rockers, at times possessing a REDD KROSS wooziness, and at others a definite pop appreciation. When those two qualities come together, as on the track "Sick," this record is at its best. The record is at its worst when RENNY is covering FOREIGNER, although some of the straightforward garage numbers feel lightly filler-ish next to some of the more warped tunes. This split is best explained by the fact that these songs were written and recorded over an eight-year period. Other than the previously mentioned styles, there are a couple of syrupy power pop numbers, like PROTEX or a less new wave POINTED STICKS filtered through *Beauty and the Beat*. If you ignore the fact that this is meant to be some kind of collection for people who are already fans of this young gentleman (the insert includes explanations of the songs but no lyrics and dedicates the record to "Punk Ex Fans Worldwide!") and…well pretty much the entire insert really, these songs are fun garage numbers. They're snotty and varied to keep the listener entertained, if not really catchy at all. That cover though, that sucks. (LP)
(Mint)

WOOLEN MEN – "Temporary Monument" LP

This band is a bit of a mixed bag for me, which is not something I'm opposed to, but parts of the record just don't work for me. Sometimes, WOOLEN MEN play upbeat, jangly indie-rock that is carried by incisive and bouncy bass lines. The vocals are pleasant and, uh, well pronounced…never veering into a territory of anger or abandon. The music, at its best, enters into a driving GANG OF FOUR territory that feels so solid. That works for me. When they take off-ramps into slower jams, the energy nosedives and I find myself staring off into space, wondering when it will end. I can hear the words better in those moments and I feel embarrassed for them. The only exception to that is the closer, "Walking Out," which sounds like it was snatched straight off of the soundtrack to the best indie teen drama of 1985. I mean that in a positive way. Mostly those slower moments are few, so overall the album is solid. (GH)
(Woodsist)

ZERO – "All Seeing Eyes/Paradox"

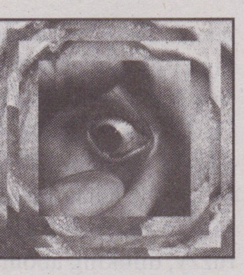
Last month I reviewed ZERO's "The Mirror/Love Ends" single, and I kind of ragged on it for being overly derivative of a specific Japanese band. I said in the review that I was sure that ZERO could and would find their own voice, and holy shit, this single from the same session reflects exactly that. This is still definitely heavily derived from the Japanese "Burning Spirits" sound, but these two songs are confident and distinctive. Brilliantly written burly hardcore with memorable riffs and some of the best Western Japanese-style vocals this side of the dudes from BURIAL and SELFISH, with beefy gang choruses and plenty of wailing leads. Oh man, the solo that opens "Paradox" is so good. I can't stop flipping this record and playing it again. A little more than five minutes of some of the best American hardcore I've heard this year, all wrapped up in a fantastic-looking silk-screened sleeve. (AU)
(Desolate)

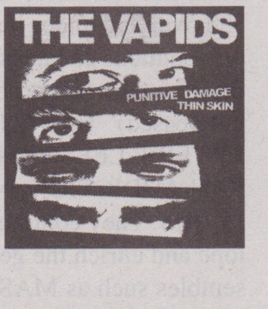
ZONE INFINIE – LP

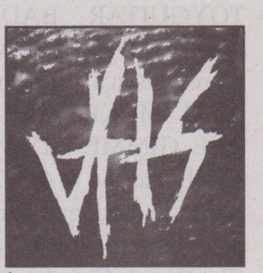
Who doesn't love pleasant surprises? I did a little internet exploring to see what else this group has done, but this seems to be it. Straight to LP! And when your material is this well prepared, why not? My favorite thing about this LP, in our current world of genre worship, is that there are no obvious styles to pigeonhole it in with. It's melodic and spunky and very well written. It doesn't have any apparent leanings toward pop punk, post-punk, D-beat, Oi!, mod, noise, or any particular style—it's just a great punk album! Loads of hooks everywhere courtesy of the bass, vocals, guitar, and drums. There are no weak tracks. The recording is honest and straightforward. Nothing flashy or produced, but nothing lacking either. I'm definitely gonna be playing this album many times after reviewing it, which is rare. I'm on the edge of my seat. What's next, guys? (MA)
(Bisounours / Maloka / Senseless Acts of Anger)

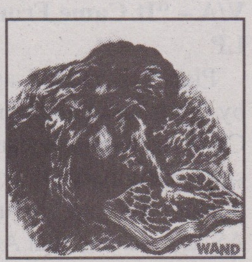
V/A – "Fat Music Vol. 8: Going Nowhere Fat" CD

The 1988 release of *Suffer* by BAD RELIGION really redefined what became known as melodic hardcore. Thusly inspired, Fat Mike of NOFX not only took up the gauntlet, fitted it like the proverbial glove, and ran with it and then some, but set up his own label—Fat Wreck Chords—who promptly

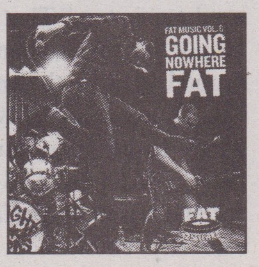








ZERØ
PARADØX



released a series of equally genre (re)defining discs, not only from NOFX, but LAGWAGON, PROPAGANDHI, STRUNG OUT, GOOD RIDDANCE, LAWRENCE ARMS, NO USE FOR A NAME, SNUFF and well, loads more. For 25 years now. Makes me both feel old, and warm and fuzzy, thinking about it all! Definitely the go-to label for the best in melodic hardcore, but lots more in-between, around, and over and under it all. This latest sampler contains 25 bands (of course), featuring 25 recent (some so recent that they're unreleased) from NOFX, SWINGIN' UTTERS, LEFTOVER CRACK, WESTERN ADDICTION, NIGHT BIRDS and PEARS. They continue to push the envelope and enrich the genre with "new" ensembles such as MASKED INTRUDER, TOYGUITAR, BAD COP/BAD COP and GET DEAD, as well as cranking out more classics from the stable, including REAL MCKENZIES, ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES, LESS THAN JAKE and the MAD CADDIES. Still the gold standard, and here's the next installment of ample proof. (RK)
(Fat Wreck Chords)

V/A – "It Came From Plan-It-X 2014" LP

Plan-It-X started as a half-assed joke by my friend Samantha back in 1994 and Chris Clavin has carried it along ever since. Originally, they put out a lot of pop punk, those first few incredible BANANAS albums and that AGAINST ME! CD-EP that had people shitting their pants from coast to coast. Then, at some point, the label became synonymous with the sub-genre of folk punk…a sub-genre that I have gone through great pains to avoid with every fiber of my tender being. My friend Will plays in a very popular folk punk band that has ties to Plan-It-X and I once told him, "I don't like your band because it sounds like it's made for sober, white suburban teenagers." Without missing a beat, he replied, "Teenagers need music too." That is a valid point and I think that this exchange should give you a good idea of the mindset with which I'm approaching this compilation. I'm trying to be open-minded about it. The MOUNTAIN GOATS started in 1991 (or so) and basically perfected the art of the carefully enunciated, painfully sincere, self-loathing, lo-fi, acoustic pop song. Whether intentional or not, it sounds like many of the solo (or simply acoustic) performers featured on this LP have graduated with a bachelor's degree from the esteemed John Darnielle School of Songwriting. Some of the performers are so painfully overwrought and earnest that I had to take a break from listening to the comp to cleanse my palate, so to speak. Some positive moments that I found were the songs by YOUR HEART BREAKS and BOOGDISH. The former always succeeds at writing top-notch, confessional queer indie-punk. The latter has been honing his art of weirdo, electronic, outsider punk for years, but sounds almost like a normal rock band on this cut…but still unlike the other bands on here. The rest of the comp is rounded out by more personal-as-political pop punk that I found to be irrelevant to my lifestyle choices. Also, apparently, JAPANTHER is still a band. If the names SUPER FAMICOM, MITCH THE CHAMP, SPOONBOY, GHOST MICE, MARTHA and DOGBRETH mean anything to you, you'll probably be picking up this compilation. Is this music for teenagers? I don't know. My favorite bands were MINOR THREAT and the MINUTEMEN when I was a teenager. Maybe this is what teenagers listen to now. I wouldn't know. (GH)
(Plan-It-X)

V/A – "Noncommunicative Violence" EP

So I was listening to this comp and thinking to myself, "Boy, all these bands have the same funny high-pitched vocals." Yeah, turns out it's incorrectly labeled as a 45 when it should be played at 33. So heads up. That being said, some of these bands are kinda similar sounding anyway. There's not a lot of information provided, but I think these are all or mostly German bands playing powerviolence and / or fast hardcore, with some nods towards the classic metallic German '90s HC style. I dig STRAFPLANET's classic slow / fast approach, as it has that CAPITALIST CASUALTIES loose punk vibe to it; CEVASSE have a spoken-word breakdown that's totally '90s, as is the huge mosh riff that follows it; CAPTIAN CAVEMAN's track has the muddy recording and high-pitched squealing vocals of an early UNHOLY GRAVE rehearsal tape. Everything else is pretty forgettable. (AU)
(Knochen / Nasty Production)

V/A – "We're Loud: '90s Cassette Punk Unknowns" 2xLP

The concept: a *double-LP* full of never-released-beyond-cassette punk from bands that rotated around an individual, one Jamie Paul Lamb, recorded with various combos out west from 1993-99, as he wandered these United States runnin', just runnin' from the lure of "The Damage the Needle Done." We're talking over 30 blasts of sub-normality that are all over the map stylistically, with the unifying thread being a misanthropic four-track punk ethos, under monikers like MID CITY NUISANCE, VAN BUREN WHEELS, the FUCKING PIGS, MAGISTER LUDI, on and on. Now, everyone "knows" that there is a fucking ton of cool unreleased underground mania hiding on cassettes (and after about '97 or so, on CD-R) from this decade, but it's a bit inconceivable that this *much* frankly great material could be pumped out via such a tight axis. I checked up and the story is totally legit—it's really all previously unknown and there's a bandcamp online under this guy's name with even more of the same. This could've ranked as one of the most indulgent vanity projects ever if it weren't so consistently entertaining. Even if you are super fussy and only sourced the top-shelf stuff on '90s labels like Bag of Hammers, Rip Off, Repent, Goner, Sympathy, etc. you'd discern at least four EP's worth of shit on here that would make this a keeper. Fucking *weird*! (RW)
(Black Gladiator / Slovenly)

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Aklasan: aklasan.bigcartel.com
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Apatrida: apolita@email.cz
Army of Bad Luck: armyofbadluck.com
Automatic: automaticrecordings.bandcamp.com
Bastages: dannyhooley.nc@gmail.com
Bird Trouble: birdtrouble-ch.com
Boss Tuneage: PO Box 74 Sandy, SG19 2WB, Bedfordshire, UK, bosstuneage.com
Bleeding Heart Nihilist Productions: Mainzer Str. 16A, Berlin 10715, GERMANY, bleedingheartnihilist.de
Blind Pigeon: blindpigeonrecords.com
Buryzone: buryzone@seznam.cz
Byllepest: byllepestdistro.blogspot.com
Dead Tank: deadtankrecords.com
Desolate: desolaterecords.storeenvy.com, desolaterecordsmpls@gmail.com
Dogs and Vultures: dogsandvulturesdistro@gmail.com
Doomed To Extinction: dtepunk.com
Carbonated Sounds: carbonatedrecords.bandcamp.com
Carlestine: carlestine@hotmail.com
Casino Trash: casinotrashrecords.bandcamp.com
Coffin Cut: coffincutrecords.bigcartel.com
Crapoulet: crapoulet.fr
Deranged: 2700 Lower Road, Roberts Creek, BC V0N 2W4 CANADA, derangedrecords.com
Dirtnap: 5857 SE Foster Rd., Portland, OR 97206, dirtnaprecs.com
Dr. Mary's Monkey: facebook.com/drmarysmonkey
EMF: emfrecords@gmail.com
Exabrupto: exabrupto@hotmail.com
Fashionable Idiots: fashionableidiots.blogspot.com
Fat Wreck Chords: fatwreck.com
Fight: Hikivuorenkatu 17D36, 33710 Tampere, FINLAND, jonathonfightrecords@gmail.com
Flinch Lumin: happy7.bandcamp.com/releases
Goner: 2152 Young Ave., Memphis, TN 38104, goner-records.com
GRF: grfrecords.estranky.cz
Heel Turn: heelturnrecords.com
Hell City: lacy@detroit442.com
HHBTM: PO Box 742, Athens, GA 30603, hhbtm.com
Hjuboká Orba: orba@seznam.cz
Homeless: PO Box 2123, Brunswick East, VIC 3057, AUSTRALIA, homelessvinyl.com.au
Human Head: 168 Johnson Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11206, thejackedbennies.com
Imminent Destruction: imminentdestruction.bigcartel.com
In The Red: PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90041 intheredrecords.com
Iron Lung: PO Box 95521, Seattle, WA 98145, lifeironlungdeath.blogspot.com
Jade Tree: 2310 Kennwynn Rd, Wilmington, DE 19810, jadetree.com
Kibou: kibourecords.bigcartel.com
Kink: kink-records.de
Knochen Tapes: knochentapes.blogspot.com
La-Ti-Da: latidarecords.com
La Vida Es Un Mus: lavidaesunmus.com
Light Screamer: lightscreamer.net
Lookout Mountain Daredevils: lookout.mtn.daredevils@gmail.com
Maloka: malokadistro.com
Midgetmen: midgetmen.bandcamp.com
Mint: PO Box 3613, Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y6, CANADA, mintrecs.com
Music For Liberation: musicforliberation.com
NE!: nerecords.se
Northern Liberties: northernliberties.bandcamp.com
No Universe: notheband.bandcamp.com
Odd Box: oddboxrecords.com
Orchestrated Dystopia: orchestrateddystopiarecords.bigcartel.com
Pelican PowWow: pelicanpowwow.com
Petruska: petruskarecords.bandcamp.com
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Psychic Hysteria: astralskulls.com
Puerecords: puerecords@yahoo.com
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Randy: randyrecords.bigcartel.com
Ashley Reaks: ashleyreaks.com
Red Gum: facebook.com/TheShortsBand
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Riding Ancient Waves: myspace.com/rawrecs
Rockstar: Viktoriastraße 51, 52066 Aachen, GERMANY, rockstarrecords.de
Rosa Punx Collective: Dan Nguyen, KE Studánce 1029,Orlová 735 14, CZECH REPUBLIC
Runny Bum: hobopope.com
Rusto-Osiris: rusto-osiris.com
Said Gun: saidgun.bandcamp.com
Salinas: PO Box 32257, Detroit, MI 48232
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Shark Inferno: sharkinferno@gmail.com
Siyanie: izd_siyanie.ru, siyanie.bandcamp.com
Slovenly: slovenly.com
Smegma: smegmarecords.com
Spastic Fantastic: spasticfantastic.de, maz@spasticfantastic.de
SS: 1809 S St. #101-276, Sacramento, CA 95811, s-srecords.com
Static Shock: staticshockrecords.limitedrun.com
Sudden Death: Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby, BC V5G 3H0, CANADA, suddendeath.com
Suffer Damage: Wallebosstraat 7, 9890 Asper, BELGIUM, sufferdamagecontact@gmail.com
Surfin' Ki: facebook.com/surfinkirecords
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TLS: zonaderuido@hotmail.com
The Tosspints: thetosspints.com
Totalitarianism Still Continues: label.punkgen.sk
Trouble In Mind: troubleinmindrecs.com
Le Turc Mecanique: leturcmecanique.bandcamp.com
Ugly Pop: uglypop.bigcartel.com
Ultima Ratio: ultima.ratio@seznam.cz
Urinal: urinalvinyl.com
Vacant Lot Entertainment: 6401 Shellmound St., Unit 7408, Emeryville, CA 94608, vacantlotentertainment.com
Vörös Ordög: vm666hc@seznam.cz
Waterslide: watersliderecords.com
Way Back When: Taskinlaan 9, 2361XM Warmond, THE NETHERLANDS, waybackwhenrecords.com
Woodsist: woodsist.com

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DEMOS

Send releases to MRR, Attn: Demos, PO Box 460760, San Francisco, CA 94146. Releases without artwork will not be considered. Reviews by Matt Badenhop, Heather Blotto, Robert Collins, Samantha Gladu, Greg Harvester, Mike Leslie, Sean Nieves-Quiñones, Jason Ryan, Heather Wreckage and Shit Zoo.

AMMUNITION – *Sick And Mental Demo 2015* – Reckless and speedy hardcore punk from Pittsburgh, complete with hand drawn skulls, bullets, knives, and mouths. Sadly, the sound quality on this tape is really poor, which I think was unintentional, as it sounds like the recording is at least decent. The style lands somewhere between CRUCIFIX and GRIMPLE. Snotty, fast, dirty, and also kind of catchy sometimes. This is the real kind of "raw." (Matt) (8-song cassette, lyrics included, 4417 Butler St. Apt 2, Pittsburgh, PA 15201)

ANIMAL CRIMES – This tape opens skewing toward the S.H.I.T. side of current hardcore, with pogoable 1-2 drums over some dynamic guitars and reverbed vocals, tough but not thickheaded. The latter half slips comfortably into the charms of an earlier time with a more straightforward, thrashing style that reminds me of JERRY'S KIDS and URBAN WASTE in parts. The tape closes with a RUDIMENTARY PENI cover, so there's that too. I had to look up just where exactly Newfoundland/St. John's *actually* is, and goddamn the Canadian east coast is some weird shit. Good bands though. (Shit) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, 48 Franklyn Ave, St. John's, NL A1C4L1 CANADA)

ASHERAH – I'm fine with slow, but ASHERAH are way better when they play fast…which they don't do until two minutes into the second track. Lyrics are personal and intense, assailing male privilege and addressing depression with soul-baring transparency. Overall view is of a melodic crust band with shoegazing/metal parts that work fine on their own but don't quite fit the exceptionally gravelly vocals. (Robert) (4-song cassette, lyrics included, asherah.bandcamp.com)

BEELZEBUKKAKE – *Automated Atrocities* – I picked this up for a couple of reasons—the name sounded so bad and juvenile that I don't think anyone else would review it and the included note that excited me, explaining that this is handheld-cassette recordings of printing presses. Let me tell you off the bat that this is 2 hours of industrial clanging mechanical rhythmic noise. There's screaming, banging on metal with hammers, and various power tools that accompany the toiling presses as they clank along. The included note also mentions that this is the very first attempt at creating music that Jace Grones, the human behind the noise pseudonym, has undertaken. Hats off to you for producing something pretty cool that doesn't usually grace the pages and mailbox of this magazine. Not a hook or chorus or melody present, but very meditative and entrancing. The packing of the tape itself is also remarkable—the paper that the quasi-Soviet inspired art is printed on is fragile and thin like an insect's wings, already showing signs of tearing along the folds. The only downside is that there are two references to "Voodoo" on this and I think exoticizing people's religious and cultural practices as an aesthetic by those outside of it sucks, and something I'd like to see excised from noise music, along with fascist imagery, gendered violence and apathy. (Sean) (33-song cassette, lyrics not included, includes download code, angrymoonproductions.com, facebook.com/jace.grones)

BETA BOYS – These Kansas City fuckers put this tape out last year but we're just getting it? Maybe it already got reviewed? Whatever. There's a dude from NUKE CULT fronting this band, but I don't know what those guys sounded like anyway. Degenerate, fucked up, mutant-style, Midwestern basement punk. The lyrics read like they're written by a 7th grader with a leather jacket. The guitar sounds like it was found in a sewer. Fast and dumb as shit. Yeah, it's good. (Greg) (5-song cassette, lyrics included, Eat the Life, 1719 W. Albion Ave, Chicago, IL 60626, eatthelife.bigcartel.com)

BITCHIN' REALITY – Loud, fast punk from Chicago. Forceful and trebly, successfully getting their point across. Some choice lines: "*You think I'm lucky you wanna fuck me? Yr not a* nice guy, *stop pretending*." Also, "*You heard I'm crazy? Well, you heard right. Can't fix me, can't save me, just stay away*." Very to-the-point lyrically, and confidently delivered. No space between songs for a breath. One last line to really hook you in: "*I thought you gave me butterflies but it was just a shart*." Brilliant. (Matt) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, whatrealityisthis@gmail.com)

BLACK – Boston-style hardcore from Spain. The vocals kinda sound like CELTIC FROST or how I remember KREATOR's but I could be wrong. This is a solo project of a member of the band GOODFELLAZ, which sounds more like 1993 beatdown. "Burn all your records now" is definitely a statement I can get behind. Insulting someone using the word "pussy" isn't. It *is* preceded by the qualifier "sweet little" so maybe this guy should open up a Vine account and give PLIES a run for his money. (Sean) (4-song cassette, lyrics included, ourfutureisblack.bandcamp.com, 3DBrecs@gmail.com)

BLACK ROT – *Purity Of The Mind* – Disgusting blackened crust from Russia, BLACK ROT don't play their tracks as much as they regurgitate them. The music churns and then it grinds and even the grind is lumbering and painful…and speaking of painful: the vocals are just foul and putrid, as if the mere act of spitting the words out repulses the singer. There is nothing appealing about this cassette in any way, which is what makes it so good. They are devastatingly heavy and the riffs are sick in every possible positive manner… nothing slick, nothing polished, but far from some inept *"so bad it's good"* nonsense (that I love, by the way), just guttural deathcrustmetal madness from a defunct band. Do not resist. (Robert) (7–track cassette, lyrics included, Sergei Babykin, Marata 22–39, St Petersburg 191040 RUSSIA, blackrot.bandcamp.com, reforestationrecords.bandcamp.com)

BLACK TEETH – *Demode* – This is mid-tempo hardcore from Germany, a bit sluggish at times. Raw demo on Kink Records includes songs about being wasted and horny and being a dirtbag. The song "Make Vandalism Not Art" is poppier than the rest and catchy, worth multiple listens. Looking forward to BLACK TEETH dialing it in. (Samantha) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, ralf@kink-records.de, black-teeth.bandcamp.com)

BLACKBALL – *3 Songs* – BLACKBALL is a brand spanking new band playing fucking hard and raw USHC that will trap you in a tower of sound for all three heavy songs on this tape. Can you handle it, punk? (Wreckage) (3-song cassette, lyrics not included, blackballhc@gmail.com, sorrystate@gmail.com)

BLIND TIGERS – *Mosquito* – This leans more toward bluesy-grunge than punk. It still has a fairly direct approach, and the song structures are pretty interesting and the vocalist creates some pretty catchy hooks. From Louisville, Kentucky, and not your typical celebrated punk-genre fare, but not too bad either. (Matt) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, blindtigersusa.com)

BOBBY PERU – This tape came with a button that said "I Wanna Do Bobby Peru," which I immediately chucked into my house's free box. I don't want to do you, Bobby Peru. I don't even know you, but more importantly I don't understand why you would find bro-humor like that worthy of printing on a button. Anyways, this tape is pretty good! The first couple tracks start off garage punk-y, almost as if the BRIEFS were bad boys, but later on branches off into more interesting territory, such as the last song "Whatever's Good Enough," replete with gloomy riffs and solos sandwiched between lyrics like "Don't you wanna blow your brains out?" (Wreckage) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, bobbyperupdx.bandcamp.com)

BOY SCOUTS – *Boy Scouts For Girls* – The tape opens up with taps and explodes into a FUZZBOX-like song about maintaining one's own strong identity. A three-piece of fuzzy bass, trumpet, drums, and two vocals compose seven feminist jams which touch on the absurdity of Greek life at college, how you should break up with your boyfriend (because he's no good for you), negativity, and global warming. The band is from Buffalo, NY and the tape was put out by Drug Party Tapes *and* Meow Or Never Tapes. I wish it was longer. (Samantha) (7-song cassette, lyrics not included, cheesecatsgomeow@gmail.com, drugparty.org)

BROCRUSHER – *Fuck You* – Heavy queer crust from Vancouver. Don't expect any of those Scandi–melodies here though, this is an unpolished lurch with sinister vocal howls that alternates between mid-tempo heaviness and ramshackle fast bursts. Not for the faint. (Robert) (8-song cassette, lyrics not included, brocrusher.bandcamp.com)

BROKEN CROSS – *Through Light To Night* – Legitimately weird. Snare sounds like a horseshoe clopping on a cobblestone street in 1700s London, vocals sound like bedroom death/nu-metal, guitar sounds like the ghost of Randy

Uchida spraying GISM all over the demo review section. It actually makes no sense. One track has MAIDEN–worthy dueling guitar leads and the next is an exercise in limitless metal genres manifested in one bedroom. Seriously weird and not for the weak. (10-song cassette, lyrics not included, xberserkerrecordsx.bandcamp.com)

BUNNY FIVE COAT – *Anymore* – Vocals sound like BAD RELIGION (but female), and music isn't far off (I'm talking thirty years ago BAD RELIGION, but slower). Melodic punk with a notably gritty guitar and a few exceptionally catchy bits from a Pittsburgh band that was active in the early '00s and recently rejoined the action. (Robert) (5-song CD-R, lyrics not included, bunnyfivecoat.bandcamp.com)

BURIAL TEENS – There's a lot of Kansas City happening in the demos section this month. Dissonant, feedback-y, shrill guitars compete with a harshly screaming dude for space at the forefront. The bass and drums hold down the foundation, often playing circular rhythms that lay the groundwork for guitar freakouts and shit. Apparently, they already broke up, but some of these people are in PHANTOM HEAD and doing similar stuff, so just go find that tape. (Greg) (10-song cassette, lyrics not included, burialteens@gmail.com)

BURNT HAIR / COLD WASTE – *Burnt Waste* – COLD WASTE kicks this split tape off with some dreamy cold wave backed by a plodding drum machine. Not the most innovative venture, but it's well written and sounds great. BURNT HAIR is biting the style of neo-folk sketchoids DEATH IN JUNE. Repetitive, atmospheric, and hymn-like stuff with some electronics. (Matt) (5-song cassette, lyrics not included, popnihil.bandcamp.com)

CHAMBRE FROIDE – *La Mort Des Cultes* – Dark and tribal nightmarish whispers within a maelstrom storm of primitive blackened sorcery and thrash. Not a moment of skepticism or speculation is allowed, the way black metal should be. For the most part this tape is fairly generic, but the tones, pace and vocals are intensely legit—it might as well be from the turn of the Century Black. A six-legged horse runs with this one. What on earth is going on with this synth outro? That pitch could kill a hound. It's like a vomiting baby griffin under mama's ravenwing. Here's the only song in English: *"Suffocate exterminate. Obliterate your kind. Fuck. Never see your face again. Victory."* Hmm… That's a bit sketchbook. You will ask, "Whoa…Who is this?" should it creep up on you some day. (Jason) (5-song cassette, French lyrics included, no contact info)

CHARLIE SIREN / ET TU BRUTE – *split* – ET TU BRUTE deliver anthemic rock club punk with pretty boy indie band leads. Vocals are appropriately rough and the songs are both… well, *perfect*, if that makes sense? CHARLIE SIREN sound straight up like PROPAGANDHI with a FALL OUT BOY fetish. (Robert) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, ettubrute1.bandcamp.com, charliesiren.bandcamp.com)

THE CHEAP DATES – *Piss Away Another God Damn Year* – Some real high energy street punk screamer tracks on here, along with a song that, as far as I can tell, is about how drunk driving is cool. As much as that sucks in real life, it's a pretty sick premise for a song. At least nobody is taking themselves too seriously here. The whole thing sticks together well, with some sassy vocal melodies that go beyond the basic street punk sing-along chorus style. The tracks "I'm Staying Here," and "She's in Love With a Rock'n'roll Girl" venture more into some pop punk territory, like between the BUZZCOCKS and the CLOROX GIRLS, which kind of makes me wonder if it's really been a false dichotomy between street punk and pop punk all along. (Heather Blotto) (7-song cassette, lyrics not included, thecheapdates.bandcamp.com, cheapdateschicago@gmail.com)

COLD WASTE – *Primitive* – OK, so I know the dark post-punk thing is all over the place and a lot of people are sick of it, but I for one am not (bring it on!) and I *love* this tape. COLD WASTE plays absolutely beautiful dark wave, with jangly guitar parts that can teleport you to another introspective universe and the singer sounds really similar to Robert Smith of the CURE, but way better and not whiney at all. The drums use a lot of fast, dance-y cymbal parts, all and all creating a delightful package for your sweet ears. I'm not sure if COLD WASTE broke up or not—some internet research showed that they played a last show recently—so if I were you I would track down their albums while you still can. (Wreckage) (9-song cassette, lyrics not included, coldwaste.bandcamp.com)

COORDINATED SUICIDES – Discordant, guitar driven proto-grunge that sometimes sounds like early NIRVANA (not the vocals, though, and busier) and sometimes sounds like PERE UBU through a serious acid filter (not the vocals, though, and not as squirmy). The slower tunes don't hold my attention as well, but when these boys turn it up a notch they become a legitimate force. The good side of old things becoming new again—I would have eaten these noisy alt/guitar rock jams for lunch when I was nineteen, and COORDINATED SUICIDES do an excellent job of making me hungry again. (Robert) (11-song cassette, lyrics not included, kitschymanitou.com, coordinatedsuicides.bandcamp.com)

CRIMINAL WAVE – *Rural Savages* – Chico's CRIMINAL WAVE have a really well-produced recording here and I don't mean that in a bad way. It sounds great and has tons of energy. Musically, all the ideas are well thought-out and the band is incredibly tight. Think early '80s SoCal punk like TSOL as a starting point, but with the modern "drums-up-front" style production. Sparkling chorus on the guitars is always a great touch. The vocals remain pretty flat and lack hooks throughout the whole thing, but that's my only gripe. (Matt) (14-song cassette, lyrics included, criminalwavehc.bandcamp.com)

DEAD MEN – *Anger Rising* – Fast and abrasive hardcore with metal drums and a song called "Go Out Like Darby," in case you were wondering where they are coming from. No bass, which means no low end (drummer tries to compensate with gratuitous double kick), but with nary a slow part in sight, you'll overlook that before "Chemical Dependency" gets through the intro. Good stuff. (Robert) (8-song cassette, lyrics included, $5 ppd, 1705 Kings Highway Apt. 4, Swedesboro, NJ 08085, afraidofthebasement.com)

DFMK – *TV & Dirty Trash (EP, Demos and Crap 2010–2013)* – This release compiles three years of this Tijuana band's releases, and gets all over the place in some ways. There is some hardcore sounding stuff, some pop punk sounding songs, and even some acoustic ones thrown in. The vocals reminded me of CIV in some ways, sounding rough in that pleasing way, while still actually singing. No voice cracking though. All the vocals are sung in Spanish and there are a whopping 37 songs! (Mike) (37-song cassette, no lyrics or track listing, dfmk.bandcamp.com)

DISCIPLINE – *Sexual Heathen* – As a concept, DISCIPLINE is pretty entertaining: a bunch of purported pervs making a concept band about weird sex shit. I get it, and it's pretty fun. As a band, DISCIPLINE are fine; mostly mid paced punk with bellowing male vocals, walking a fine line between melodic punk and rock'n'roll with unsettling comfort. This is not a demo per se but a full album, pro recording and all that business, that is lubed up and ready for action. (Robert) (11-song cassette, lyrics included, m.s.woellert@gmail.com, discipline.bandcamp.com)

DON'T GET BORED / TEAR OFF CLEAN UP – *split* – Ohio's TEAR OFF CLEAN UP play dirty anthemic punk. I can identify with "Tha Second Winter" a little more than I'm comfortable with however *(yes, kids, I'm old…but I still know what it's like!)*. Michigan's DON'T GET BORED are a little tougher, a little faster, but they deliver their *"fuck you"*s with just enough of a wink. Two solid punk bands. (Robert) (8-song cassette, lyrics included, $5 ppd, Tony, 2040 Alvin St., Toledo, OH 43607, txcup.bandcamp.com, dontgetbored.bandcamp.com)

DÖRTEBEKER – Perhaps their name comes from Störtebeker, the long standing Hamburg squat? These guys are a galloping-melodic combo from Bremen. Some of the somber guitar lines remind me of EA80, but the mid-high range vocals couldn't be farther from that in style. Not to act like everyone reading this knows their German punk, but TURBOSTAAT also comes to mind. The tape came with a stack of anti-fascist stickers and stuff, so you know they're on our side. I dig it. (Matt) (8-song cassette, lyrics included, doertebeker.net)

DUMB LUCK – *Tides* – Recently a Portland promoter was crowdsourcing opening bands of the pop-punk variety on Facebook. Apparently, he should check Corvallis, OR! This debut pro-printed self-released cassette by the band DUMB LUCK sounds like late '90s pop punk that could have been released by the G-7 WELCOMING COMMITTEE with the WEAKERTHANS. It's slightly slow and Americana-tinged, with guy and girl vocals. Will be touring the west coast in September! (Samantha) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, dumbluck.bandcamp.com)

EMASCULATOR – *Threatening Visibility* – This one is a serious punch in the gut. Blown-out, low end distortion running rampant underneath an uncompromisingly ferocious queer/trans positive hardcore churn. Blistering fast hardcore driven by the bass while the guitar does…well, it's doing something…and then the slow parts turn your insides foul. It's noisy because that's what happened, not as a result of contrived manipulation…EMASCULATOR *are* chaos. Manic and painful lo–fidelity punk or, in a single word, excellent. (Robert) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, emasculatorpdx@gmail.com)

EMPTY PALACE – *The Serpent Between the Stars* – This is music from a past future. A very synth-heavy, yet guitar rocking tape, with lots of '70s prog influences. It has those double tracked vocals I so enjoy, and all the starts and stops you need. Real deep spacey sounding, a psychedelic experience. (Mike) (12-song cassette, lyrics not included, emptypalaceband.com)

EXTERNS – *All That We Know Is Death* – At first listen, this reminds me DRIVE LIKE JEHU, which makes sense given at least one band member's time in the San Diego post-hardcore band COLOSSUS OF ROADS. This is more chord-driven than the hot licks of the previously mentioned bands, touching on a sound not unlike like the WIPERS or even the more melodic side of BORN AGAINST. (Sean) (5-song cassette, lyrics included, $5 ppd, email/paypal elipdx@gmail.com)

FIGHT ROSA FIGHT – *Step One: Start A Band* – Wonderfully pissed-off poppy queer punk/riot grrrl right out of Cheltenham, UK. Its sounds '90s-as-hell and its great! The title of this tape is their praxis; the raw musicianship brims with vitriol and serves as a platform to say *"fuck off"* to right-wing shitheads, to talk about femicide, wage gaps and male supremacy. The vocals swing between THAT DOG-esque triple harmonies and harsh call-and-response shouts. This too-short tape is already sold out, but the upside is that it looks like by the time this sees print they will have recently released a CD-EP and toured with the ETHICAL DEBATING SOCIETY. Sounds right at home with Bristol's TOWEL and the JELAS. "*This is a call to arms / This is a call to drop the diet pills / This is a call to saying no / Not now / Not ever.*" (Sean) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, fightrosafight.bandcamp.com)

FRAUDE – A cross between LIFE CHAIN, DIRT and HAGAR THE WOMB, FRAUDE demonstrates solid lo-fi anarcho punk with catchy dance beats. Repetitive to an intoxicating degree, with lots of reverb and delay on the high-pitched vocals and chaotic discordance in the guitar. The bass is a grumbler and the drums are ratty, dusty and simple. Highly recommended. (Jason) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, fraude@riseup.net, fraudebdx.bandcamp.com)

FUCKING HEADACHE – *Headcleaner* – Four on the floor UK styled punk with a serious film of dirt that refuses to be scraped off. Lyrics are dark and ugly, and their delivery is what makes the band stand out: snotty shards of disappointment and isolation feel like they are being thrown *at* you instead of presented to you. Not pretty. (Robert) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, fnheadachepgh@gmail.com, fuckingheadache.bandcamp.com)

FUNDAMENTAL – *Violent Dance Tape .0001* – Last month I got to see FUNDAMENTAL as part of the "Stupid Mental Itch" noise-punk package tour that swept up the West Coast. It's a relief to hear the recorded stuff and not be disappointed in the slightest. Direct and to the point GAI worship, sometimes edging into the speedier SCREAMING NOISE territory, but it's the vocals that push this recording into its own FUNDAMENTAL-ness: howling wails of frustration from the same source as CONDITION. Highly recommended on all fronts. (Shit) (8-song cassette, lyrics not included, fundamentalnoise@gmail.com)

GAASP — My first impression upon hearing the feedback was this was going to be some sort of TERRORIZER/E.N.T. worship. Riffs start with '80s power metal style, which was intriguing, and continue to a DIE KREUZEN/early C.O.C. hardcore D-beat attack. Vocals are sort of DR. KNOW screaming and singing. Solid punk with surprising guitar licks from the arena. The songwriting and titles seem to clash, as this is a hardcore punk tape in my opinion, with titles such as "Waking The Witch," "Skin Like Snakes" and "Valkyries." Always cool when a genre is sincere about its interests without coming across as generic. This is kvlt and good diminutive dark punk. (Jason) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, gasp.pdx@gmail.com, gaasp.bandcamp.com)

GOOD GRIEF – "Lay the Blame/(I Don't Really Want) Revenge" – This cassingle comes in a super slick DIY paper sleeve just like they used to at Tower Records in 1994 (except more DIY). The tape itself is metallic silver plastic that looks super cool, which is lucky since the tape is otherwise unmarked and at risk of getting lost in your pile of other unlabeled tapes. The two songs are RAMONES-zone melodic pop punk along the lines of the MARKED MEN. The tracks are short and tight with super catchy vocal hooks. There's some dynamic to them, like you can tell the chorus started cause you kinda started dancing a little without noticing. Overall, the songs are really catchy and fun and short. It seems like both songs are about relationships gone wrong, which is super boring but also fits in pretty well with the genre. (Heather Blotto) (2-song cassette, lyrics not included, goodgriefLV.tumblr.com, goodgriefLV.bandcamp.com, GoodGriefLV@gmail.com)

GRAHAMREPULSKI – *Octopus Bribes* – The cover of this tape rocks a super early '90s vibe, with bright colors, cut and paste, and maybe a snippet of porn. Inside you'll find some songs that are pretty chill, in the realm of FLAMING LIPS and the better GUIDED BY VOICES tracks. There's some text inside the j-card but it's chopped up and pasted back together, not readable. There are two songs on the tape and the accompanying note suggests a full album coming out September 1. (Heather Blotto) (2-song cassette, lyrics not included, grahamrepulski.bandcamp.com/)

HEADLESS RATS / REJIEM – *The Living Envy the Dead* – Two noise punk ragers from Boston. HEADLESS RATS play pretty basic raw D-beat punk that sounds killer through their studio filter, while REJIEM dish out chaotic jaw-dropping raw punk that kinda suffers from their (obviously intentional) raw presentation. Both bands will make fans of the noisy studded shit weak at the knees, and with good reason. (Robert) (11-song cassette, lyrics included, rejiem.bandcamp.com, headlessratspunk.bandcamp.com)

KIT WHARTON – *High, Nice to Meet You* – First things first, I really appreciate a tape with a good J-Card, and the illustration on KIT WHARTON's is an incredible and intricate fantasy forest that I found myself staring at (aka putting off other things I need to do today) for way too long. Side A (and a lot of side B) is pretty bummery and gloomy garage, bringing to mind the COUNTRY TEASERS (circa *Destroy All Human Life*). Certain songs are very bouncy and catchy, and KIT WHARTON would probably sound like a completely different band with a more upbeat singer, but by different I definitely don't mean better. The brooding, gloomy indifference the singer brings ties it all together and makes this tape very excellent. (Wreckage) (11-song cassette, lyrics not included, kitwharton.bandcamp.com)

LIMBS BIN / SIDETRACKED – *split* – Dude. SIDETRACKED are a seriously under the radar powerviolence band, and their approach to this ten song effort is pretty next level. A droning pulse spans their entire side, interrupted by short two to five second bursts but it feels like one song. Good job, as expected. LIMBS BIN are aggressive powerviolence manifested as power electronics…they are always intense and engaging, and this short blast is no different. This whole tape is about 4 minutes long, and not a second is wasted. (Robert) (11-song cassette, lyrics included, followmeintothelasereye@gmail.com, sidetracked.bandcamp.com)

MUSCLES PLANT – Okay, this is honestly what I sometimes wish would happen in punk more often. In theory, it seems doable, but in execution, it usually falls so fucking flat. What I'm talking about is playing melodic punk with the intensity and speed of hardcore. Why is it so shitty all the time? MUSCLES PLANT is not shitty. Melodic punk riffs played at lightning fast speed with a singer who is going the fuck off. All four songs fly past in a few blinks of the eye. Did you like that GRIMPLE *Up Your Ass* LP? Yeah, me too. Get this. (Greg) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, Eat the Life, 1719 W Albion Ave. Chicago, IL 60626, eatthelife.bigcartel.com)

THEE MVPS – *First Two Years* – Super catchy at times, pretty at others, and heavy in between, THEE MVPS are a garage rock band, very much in the vein of certain Burger Records releases or the band HARLEM. Even if garage isn't really to your liking, I feel like it would be really hard not to like this tape, and it feels like a real treat to get two years of a band's work compiled onto one release. (Wreckage) (14-song cassette, lyrics not included, theemvps.bandcamp.com)

THE MYSTICS – Direct, catchy and raw punk from Chicago. The guitar tone on this thing is right on the edge of clean and distorted in the same way as early BANANAS and SEXY. It has enough hooks to hold your interest and stay in your head long after the four/five minutes it takes to listen to it. Good shit. I wish there were more songs on this tape. (Greg) (3-song cassette, lyrics not included, Eat The Life, 1719 W. Albion Ave, Chicago, IL 60626, eatthelife.bigcartel.com)

NEW DOUBT – I think this sounds like horror punk crashing into a circus punk caravan, and I totally do not like it. But I am supposed to tell you about shit, not pass judgement on shit…so: This is some horror punk but it kinda sounds like circus punk. There's an obvious attempt to sound creepy, but sometimes it just sounds like SOCKEYE, who are not creepy *(I love SOCKEYE, by the way)*, or maybe like some No Wave stuff. I mean, it ain't bad…NEW DOUBT are doing a thing (and it did sound a bit better when I listened a second time to make sure I wasn't being a dick), but the vision is a little lost on me. But if you need evidence that outsider punk is alive and well….look to Tucson, my friends. Look to Tucson. (Robert) (5-song cassette, lyrics not included, no contact info)

NIGHT PROWLER – *Stalin's Boots* – Take a bit of GG ALLIN, WORLD BURNS TO DEATH and the STOOGES, cut the songs in half and keep all the fire of unrest and political disgust. There is also a certain NYHC sound to this tape delivered with hardcore rock'n'roll swagger. Minimal in execution while remaining electrified from the raspy aggressive vocals to the slacker-as-fuck drum beats. If the '60s had death thrash metal, this might be it. It just sounds much older than it is. Short blasts that are so to the point and bruising. I get the feeling NIGHT PROWLER would clobber any bill. I wouldn't want to take the stage after them based on this recording alone. (Jason) (8-song cassette, lyrics included, nightprowlerhardcore.bandcamp.com)

NOT ON YOUR LIFE – A very well recorded, rather modern sounding hardcore outfit from Fort Smith, Arkansas. The songs touch on religion, causing trouble out on the streets, and mild dog paranoia? Somehow this reminds me of classic rock without really sounding that way. The singer's voice is very clear, in tune, and growly in a pleasing way. (Mike) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, evanleegarner@gmail.com)

PACTE DE MORT – *Violence Occulte* – Last gasping breath raw black metal, like BONE AWL with the punk style of YDINTUHO. Bestial groans and howling viciousness with some sick side effects. Dark, looming and morbidly dank, with some sweet and subtle keyboards in a *Wrath of the Tyrant*-era EMPEROR vibe. This tape is straight up gruesome with chunky vocals that scream like the darkest of Japanese '80s metallic hardcore. You know who I'm talking about. Lots of skull photos in the liner notes—one looks like Rob Halford or more like Vic Rattlehead. (Jason) (5-song cassette, French lyrics included, no contact info)

PAINT / WOOD CHICKENS – *split* – Two Wisconsin bands share a really short cassette. WOOD CHICKENS are metallic cowpunk, it's almost like they are too fast and tight but it's a rockin' good time regardless. PAINT are looser, dirtier, and sound a little drunker too. Plenty of r'n'r swagger here though, and more than a casual nod to MC5–esque pre–punk to go along with the drawn-out guitar swerve of tracks like "House Arrest." (Robert) (7-song cassette, lyrics not included, kitschymanitou.com)

PEEPLE WATCHIN' – *Gutter Flower* – These folks started out in Boston and then moved to Olympia, WA, playing gutsy, heartfelt melodic punk along the way. They draw some influences from '90s pop punk (think early Lookout stuff… not the other shit) and the American South's formative region rock scene to create energetic, tuneful punk that is thankfully devoid of the usual gruff-voiced, overbearing male voices. I mean, there's a gruff voice here sometimes, but it's not grating or sounding like No Idea-style beard-core. It was recorded in a rush, which is sometimes evident in the vocals not always hitting the mark, but that doesn't stop this from being a solid tape front to back. Plus, they cover JACK PALANCE BAND, which is honestly one of the best bands of all time. (Greg) (10-song cassette, lyrics included, peeplewatchin.bandcamp.com)

PERMETHRIN – *Trajectories* – Furious, heartfelt and super real melodic hardcore that is kind of more melodic than hardcore, but still too angry to be pop punk. The guitar riffs are dramatic with thoughtfully melodic "pretty" parts, over powerful driving drums and bass that's sometimes so sub that it creeps up on you like a volume swell of orchestra strings. The element defining the sound of this band is definitely the vocals though. The tension and energy of the giving-it-one-hundred-percent-plus-some-because-this-might-be-your-only-chance switching off guy/gal vocals really stand out. The lyrics are beautiful, cover serious territory, and unapologetically demand that the personal is political. Definitely letting the auto-reverse function play this one on repeat for a while. (Heather Blotto) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, permethrin.bandcamp.com)

PHANTOM HEAD – When I received this band's tape, it wouldn't play, so here I am listening to a bandcamp page again like a goddamn commoner. PHANTOM HEAD brings together members of AMERICAN HATE, MEAT MIST, GLOW GOD and more to play murky, lurching, ultra distorted punk. The singer sounds kinda pissed but also like he could give a fuck less…like he's just so bored with life. The band will circulate on a riff for a long time, not unlike FLIPPER, but they rein it in and sound like they're on a lot less drugs. It's like efficient drug rock. Yes, that's what it is. (Greg) (7-song cassette, lyrics not included, phantomhead.bandcamp.com)

PIERRE & BASTIEN – *Greatest Hits* – French, minimalist punk starts with songs featuring a drum machine, and then moves on to songs with a more human percussive touch. The vocals (two male voices) are pretty monotone and the songs are four beat drivers. I get a GANG OF FOUR feeling from this. (Mike) (16-song cassette, lyrics not included, pierreetbastien.bandcamp.com)

PROFESSIONAL VICTIM – *…To Our Graves* – The style of punk PROFESSIONAL VICTIM plays is definitely not my style. It's very melodic, like late MISFITS or something off of a FAT RECORDS compilation (I can only handle so many "wo-oah-oah's" in a song and preferably none), plus their album art is *depressing*! Various pictures of a human figure are featured on the case and lyric sheet meeting their demise in different ways, be it by hanging from a tree, being shot, etc. This kind of turned me off until I read their lyric sheet, with lines such as "Rise up tear down the walls around you / then you'll see the truth will finally shine through / cause their lies will never stop what we do" and remembered my younger self first finding punk. The world seemed so dark and grim, and I was looking for someone who *got it*, who realized the world was shit but was willing to take your hand and try to find some sliver of enjoyment from it anyways. PROFESSIONAL VICTIM has their hand extended. (Wreckage) (4-song CD-R, lyrics included, snotmerchants@yahoo.com, facebook.com/professionalvictim)

RITUAL MISERY – *Trudge* – This tape starts out with a tribal beat and corrosive sampling that sound like a bulldozer and a toilet flushing. A soft eerie tone introduces the gruesome screamo vocals at a heavy doom pace. Things speed up momentarily to a premature breakdown that goes on for a while, chaotic powerviolence and death metal for Florida. Overall the vocals and percussion are punk but guitar and bass want to be death metal. Interesting. When dissected, it's not much new, but the tape is pretty unpredictable and the aggression is overwhelming. (Jason) (4-song cassette, lyrics included, ritualmiseryfl.bandcamp.com)

SAD EYED BEATNIKS – Since we are a punk mag, I will tell you that this is teetering on the edge of not-quite-punk. It's forlorn and kinda pop-oriented bedroom four-track indie rock from out in the foggy avenues of San Francisco. Each song is carried by an old drum machine and bouncy bass lines. It feels influenced by sadness, public transit and the futility of wage drudgery. If you told me this was a lost home recording from 1988, I'd believe you. (Greg) (10-song tape, lyrics not included, paisleyshirtrecords.bandcamp.com)

SATAN – *L'Odeour du Sang* – Nasty French black/punk metal. Good…really good. Ugly… like, extra ugly. Totally off the rails and chaotic, very evil, and extremely good. Like kinda blows your mood and your mind. Was not expecting much from a band called SATAN in 2015 *(seriously, punks, you can't do that)*, but this band is bringing me to my knees. Extremely epic, and intensely badass (also, this is a CD-R version of an LP released by seven labels). (Robert) (12-song CD-R, lyrics included, huremglalaï.blogspot.com, satan.bandcamp.com)

SEDATIVE – Oh, hi there ugly ass US hardcore band. Have you come to kick my face in with a few hard hitting hardcore punk songs? Thank you, I like when that happens. I like when your singer screams so loud that he distorts the whole recording, and I like when you kinda sound like DC hardcore with a hard–on for early LA punk, even though that only happens in like two songs. Also, I like when you sound like you are a bunch of teenagers who are angry enough to beat the ass of anyone who crosses their path. Yeah, you are a hardcore punk band, SEDATIVE, and I like that. (Robert) (5-song cassette, lyrics included, sedativeusa.bandcamp.com)

SNARKY – Rough and tumble, yet catchy and hooky punk from Chattanooga. Current and former members of TWAT SAUCE and FUTURE VIRGINS throw out nine energetic songs about panic attacks, missing people and losing your mind. You can kinda feel the progression from TWAT SAUCE into this band: more focused, less chaotic and an attention to melody that really works its way into your brain. Great tape. (Greg) (9-song cassette, lyrics not included, snarky.bandcamp.com)

SONIC KOOL-AID CRASH TEST – *Accident 1* – Plodding weirdo noise rock with distant *(also: lazy and kinda high sounding)* and intentionally inept guitar solos. Somewhere between the '90s college rock revival and the shoegaze revival and two dudes jamming out in their bedroom, you will find this cassette…it has moments. (Robert) (6-song cassette, lyrics included, $5 ppd, 1705 Kings Highway Apt. 4, Swedesboro, NJ 08085, afraidofthebasement.com)

SOUND4SOUND – *Making The Right Ear Jealous* – Macho-sounding hardcore with metallic guitars from Miami. Thin and soulless sounding, SOUND4SOUND reminds me more of something some alienated suburban teens with limited hardcore influences/resources would come up with, but not in a good way. The one sheet tells us they're in their 40s. Yikes… (Matt) (10-song cassette, lyrics not included, sound4sound.bandcamp.com)

SPM – Best thing in *MRR* this month. minutes of relentless powerviolence. Pure precision, total annihilation. The lyrics are every bit as bleak as the music is crushing. The blasts are brutal, the slows are like an earthmover, and the recording is colossal…nothing short of perfection, and somehow limited to 30 copies—how does that even happen? Eleven songs in seven and a half minutes. Get on board, you monkeys, because this is the express bus to Awesometown. So good. (Robert) (11-song cassette, lyrics included, knochentapes@gmx.de, knochentapes.bandcamp.com)

STONE THE CROWZ – *Protest Songs '85-'86* – This apparently reissued set of recordings from the '80s sounds like what you might expect from a British politically-inclined punk band from the '80s. Not as innovative as CRASS (who is though?) but definitely sounds like they were influenced by them. (Also, the CRASS font is a dead giveaway.) The songs are very straightforward and perhaps a little heavy handed by current punk standards, but it's hard to know what it meant to make that sound in 1985 without having been there. It does get a little weirder, creative, and more fun with the track "No More Asking Nicely (Version 2)" later on in the disc. There are some cool photos included, but very little explanation of the context of the band or info about if and how the songs were originally released. Overall, definitely cool to listen to if you're into angry '80s political punk. I could do without the use of the "napalm girl" image on the cover—using images of victims of war crimes to make your record look cool is basically profiting off it, even if your message is anti-war. I'm sure that also meant something different in '85 before punks really drove war imagery into the ground but especially with political music, it seems like a good idea to continually be re-thinking our decisions. (Heather Blotto) (16-song CD-R, lyrics included, steve@plastichead.com, www.overgroundrecords.co.uk)

STRAIGHT CRIMES – *Songs Don't Cry* – Sometimes it's frustrating how good punks are at sounding "punk" in all the right ways. This band is like a proto-punk band in the way that it has all the important elements of what matters about punk but they skipped the punk 101 textbook and just started a band. There's definitely some rock'n'roll influence, tempered by dark chord progressions and tortured vocals. The songs are mostly mid-tempo songs with super heavy hitting drums, and sometimes droney, sometimes screaming guitar riffs. I'm pretty sure there's no bass in this band but you'd never guess from the recording. It doesn't come with lyrics but the title "Songs Don't Cry" and the audible lyric "why is the world so bad?" will resonate if you appreciate lowbrow high concept cynical optimism. Really though, why is the world so bad? Definitely refreshing and full of that angry-fun-gross-lost *je ne sais quoi* that makes punk better than everything else. (Heather Blotto) (7-song cassette, lyrics not included, straightcrimes.bandcamp.com)

SUNSICK – I am a big fan of this band's LP, so I was happy to see this tape sitting among the pile of debris that is the demo box at *MRR*. These guys from Paris play punk/power pop that jauntily falls somewhere between EXPLODING HEARTS and the LOVE TRIANGLE, but with a little more gloss thrown over the top. The closer "Personne" is one of my favorites on the whole tape, recalling the nostalgic summertime feeling of the best songs by the JAGS. They bring the energy and vitality of punk that is so, so necessary to writing excellent power pop songs. Great tape. No sn≠≠oozers on this thing. (Greg) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, withtheweed@gmail.com)

TANNING MACHINE – Pittsburgh, PA noise (*Not* noise like a bunch of beeps and boops and static! Noise like filthy twitchy punks who built freaky instruments out of garbage and are playing around a burning couch in a punk house's backyard!) punk that is doing a little sampling and a little noisecore/hardcore and a little slow jam here and there, all of which will keep you on your toes. More importantly, it all sounds really rad! The reverby vocals add a nice touch, almost like keeping you from getting too close to the music. The stand-out track on this tape was the third song, "Sacred Disease," but all and all it's a solid album. (Wreckage) (10-song cassette, lyrics not incuded, tanningmachine.bandcamp.com)

UFFIZI – *Nous Sommes Riches* – I was so excited to find that this band is from Oakland (where I live) because I love them and want to see them live! This tape totally kills; ripping post-punk bordering on hardcore at times that you just want to rock the fuck out to during a scuzzy house show. Two songs in particular ("Gold" and "The Fucking Song") somehow manage to sound a lot like the GUN CLUB around *Fire of Love*, their best era. A+, UFFIZI! (Wreckage) (5-song cassette, lyrics not included, uffizioakland.bandcamp.com)

ULLATEC – I would have sworn there were horror punk keyboards, but I think it's just a weird guitar….which makes sense because the band is weird. Absolute weirdo heavy blasting punk with reverb and blasts and a lot of metal and a handful of straight HC parts just to keep you guessing. When sitting down to review a stack of demos (Oh…you think we listen to each one meticulously for days on end to formulate the perfect context and impression before sharing our words with the masses…? Sorry.), the simple ability to hold my interest is noteworthy. But I listened to this shit twice before I typed a word, trying to figure out what the fuck this Texas two-piece was trying to do…and I'm still not sure. Is "Outsider Metalpunk" a subgenre? (Robert) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, ullatectexas.bandcamp.com)

UPHEAVAL – A doomed and pulverizing intro repeats for a few measures too long, and just as my interest wanes, the Baphomethodical vocals set in and pierce my ears. Haunting, DYSTOPIA-n throat ripping from the darkness of Bostonian nights. Dual low-end vocals carry the songs through as a shadow. Barely noticeable but cloaked in sorrow. UPHEAVAL creates a mountainous sound, with grandfather clock meter on the snare and constant wind from the strings. The song progression is inspired and could easily have stayed in lazy doom metal territory but goes completely apeshit at parts, especially on the drums. For fans of WINTER, EYEHATEGOD and escaping the lunacy and weight of a William Blake painting. (Jason) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, upheavalboston.bandcamp.com)

VITRIOL – *The Crown* – This is catchy pop punk, with a touch of discordance. There are catchy leads, and the songs remain unafraid of delving into a ska part, or having a hardcore breakdown. This seems to be coming from a young voice, maintaining an earnest quality. Female/male vocals singing songs of broken trust, those in control, and uncertain futures. (Mike) (4-song cassette, lyrics included, getbetterrecords.bandcamp.com)

WATCHMAKER – This is not the most precise band I've ever heard but what they lack in effectiveness they make up for with chaos and intense noise. Certainly reminds me of some '90s German grind such as MÖRSER or SYSTRAL. I'm actually having an easier time making out the song structures at a lower volume because the layers are so brutal on the brain. Much appreciating for the *Saturn Devouring His Son* Goya reference—I also had a song with this in the title a long time ago. This band is over, but break your eardrums with this huge blistering grindcore double cassette. (Jason) (20-song cassette, lyrics not included, watchmaker1.bandcamp.com)

WATERGATE SANDALS – *Pick Apart the Jewels and Gems* – The way a lot of hardcore and punk bands use distortion, this band does with reverb. Everything here has an echo. It's pretty regular garage rock, kind of sounds like STRAWBERRY ALARM CLOCK. (Mike) (8-song cassette, watergatesandals.bandcamp.com)

WAYNE PAIN AND THE SHIT STAINS – Shoddily recorded, sloppy, garage-style, self-described "freak punk" from Kansas City. Guttural, shouted vocals are run through reverb (and delay) to sound like a puking freak on 'ludes. Maybe kinda like the REATARDS updated for the Midwestern mutant rock crowd? It's always on the edge of collapse…in a good way. (Greg) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, waynepainandtheshitstains.bandcamp.com)

WIMPS – *Super Me* – Bouncy post-punk from Seattle that skirts the border of garage rock. It is definitely more of the WIRE/WIPERS-y side of post-punk versus DELTA 5 or SLITS, but the bass still carries a lot of the songs. It is at its best when providing bubbly, jerky accents and melodies that intersect with the syncopated major barre chords and sharp arpeggios shooting rapid-fire from the guitar. I really dig when all of the band members sing together in a shouty, quasi-melodic cacophony. (Sean) (5-song cassette, lyrics not included, includes download code, thesewimps.bandcamp.com, Kill Rock Stars, 107 SE Washington St. Suite 155, Portland, OR 97214)

XURS – A new Seattle outfit employing discordant melodies and odd time structures. This makes their sound come off kind of jazzy, but it still retains the drive of punk. They really make it a point to never play a major chord or anything that resembles a pleasant melody. It's all intentional of course. I think I'd like it more if it was a little more sharp and fierce, and not quite as loose and unmelodious, but I'm into the discomfort they manage to pass on to the listener. (Matt) (8-song cassette, lyrics not included, xursrock.bandcamp.com)

YURODIVIYE – Face ripping old school death metal delivered with crust intensity. This St. Petersburg outfit is fukkn screaming on their initial release, so indescribably heavy and dishing out more power in the opening bars of their fourth unnamed track than most bands can muster in a career. YURODIVIYE (ЮРОДИВЫЕ) will leave your fists clenched and your jaw on the floor, one of the best examples of this brand of carnage that I've heard in a long long time. (Robert) (8-song cassette, lyrics included, Sergei Babykin, Marata 22–39, St Petersburg 191040 RUSSIA, reforestationrecords.bandcamp.com, yurodiviye.bandcamp.com)

V/A – *KCMO All Freaks, No Leash* – This compilation of Kansas City bands was released *two years ago* but we're just getting it now. Why?? I don't know! I'm sure that some of these bands have broken up and there's a whole new crop of bands that aren't even represented. Better late than never, I guess. Anyhow, this tape does a great job of representing the vast cross-section of punk that exists all over that city…from the Crooked Hat to that big punk house on Troost to whatever-the-name-of-those-shitty-bars-are-called to the weird-ass suburbs on the wrong side of the state line. Some stand outs for me are the always solid NATURE BOYS, the heavy BIG BUSINESS-like vibes of KEEF MOUNTAIN, the laid back rock of LAZY, the electronic "Fuck you" freak out of ROBERT PLANT'S DINGLEBERRY and the raw fucking punk of ALL BLOOD. I think what captures me the most about this comp is that it doesn't confine itself to one sub-genre of punk. My complaint is that there are hardly any women represented, as far as I can tell. (Greg) (21-song cassette, lyrics not included, xo.tapes@gmail.com)

V/A – *Stupid Mental Itch* – I've probably listened to this tape more often than anything else this past month and with good reason. Three tracks from each band, all fucking great. FUNDAMENTAL are perfect right in the middle with their own style of fast and raw noise-punk leading into the complete pogo madness and rabid-berserker-in-a-cave vocals of MUTANT ITCH. It's STUPID LIFE that takes top prize on this tape though. At the Oakland gig of the "Stupid Mental Itch" tour, STUPID LIFE blew me away with their headlining set, particularly the melodic "ooohs" and college-pop riffs of their closing song that had me thinking SUPERCHUNK meets SWANKYS. It's a loving slice of noisy pop to complement the rest of the tape's noisy devastation. Only 100 made, these might be long gone by now but the world deserves to know. (Shit) (9-song cassette, lyrics not included, darkraidslabel@gmail.com)

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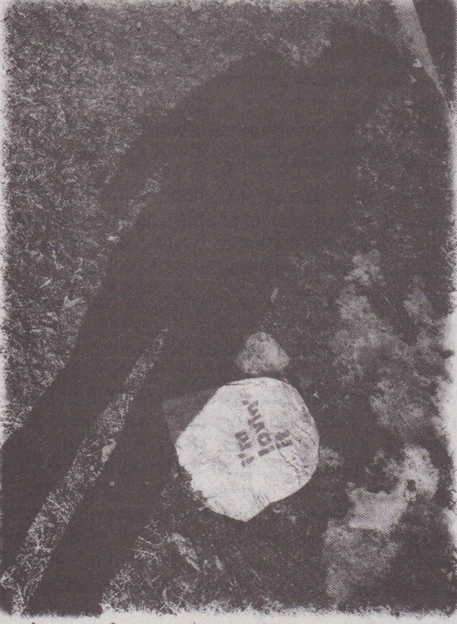

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ZINES

Send zines for review to: MRR, PO Box 460760, San Francisco, CA 94146. Please include the following info on a separate piece of paper with your zine: postpaid price, international price, if you take trades, number of pages, language, mailing address, website address, and email address.

Reviewers:
(AP) Ari Perezdiez
(DG) Dan Goetz
(DZ) Ryan Modee
(EC) E. Conner
(EW) Eli Wald
(GA) Grace Ambrose
(JB) Julia Booz
(JD) Justin Davisson
(JM) Jeff Mason
(MM) Marissa Magic
(MR) Mikey Minicomix

THE ADVENTURES OF TAD MARTIN #6(66)

$6.66 / 68 pgs

Based on the interview in the back with Al Frank and Tim Goodyear, Al lived in Chicago, and has now moved to Texas. That is to say, he's linked to the Portland cartooning scene through Tim, but cartoons out of Texas. In any case, this is another angsty auto-bio punk type comic, with some drug-use, mostly on his wife's part. Guess I know why I got picked to review these books! This comic was definitely intriguing and thought provoking. He sure as shit got high praise in his press-package from people like Crumb and Rollins, but you never know if it's a joke, or what that really means. Clearly Al's mentality and sense of humor are self-deprecating. In the first scene, he talks to the reader about picking up women in bars, and shows himself to coldly assess and calculate the odds of getting someone to go home with him. But then months later, he ends up marrying this girl he runs into there that night, who clearly is a meth-user who suffers from intense childhood-trauma and cuts herself. So he chooses to be with someone that has special needs, basically to the point where she can't take care of herself, and that makes him seem like someone who likes to take care of and help people (at least in relationships) far beyond the point of it having cost him dearly. Some people just can't be helped enough.

He does also portray himself as extremely jealous, and sneaks off to stalk his wife on the clock for his job. At least he's honest about it, but jealousy is one of those emotions that work against people. If it's on that level, something's already not right. Of course you can't trust anyone not to cheat on you, so why flip out extra-hard about it? The level of shitty relationship red flags presented would be comical, if it didn't ring so true. Why would someone choose a relationship like that? I don't know, but can't say I haven't done the same myself. He doesn't mention that many interactions with friends during the whole story, which is strange, but could be symptomatic of a bad relationship. The most unbelievable thing is that he toughed it out four and half years, and this comic is the fruit born of that twisted union. As for the art, he has a great range, a very diverse and animated style. He basically is the character Tad Martin, and it looks as though he did most of the art and writing at his job as a security guard, and then made it into a Franken-comic later. There's an immediate free-flowing feel to the art and narrative, but it does read like a graphic novel, maybe from selective assembling later. I'm guessing on some of that, but am curious to learn more about his cartooning/writing process. (MR)

1105 Sturgus Ave. S, Seattle, WA 98144 / jasontmiles@gmail.com

ANTI FADE #1

$4 / 12 pgs w/insert

Mini scene report for Portland laid out in ultra cool risographed gradients, kinda like looking at AESTHETIC blogs of Swatch designs. Tyler wants to shine light upon less hyped parts or Portland's punk scene and the end result is a really refreshing endeavor taking the spotlight away from all the studded and leathered-up punks who are permanently planted at the bar every night. Features include up and coming bands; show and venue info; interview with Andrew from Best Before 84 a tape and shirt distro; communiqué from Spetsnaz of the Combat Network; and an interview with Petty from Chapel of the Crimes, a recently transplanted tape label from Indiana. The center of this zine folds out to reveal a photo spread by Rebecca of all my favorite bands at the moment. I can't wait for the next issue. (AP)

antifadefanzine@gmail.com

ARMING THE STRIPPER #3

$3 / 16 pgs

I feel really bad that this is the first time I am hearing of this zine and it's the third issue. Dylan writes a perzine on being a stripper, but it's so much more. In this issue they chronicle coming out as trans to their mom, which starts out with her interpretation of her birth story, then goes into the separation of gender and sexuality that happens when Dylan goes into work and navigates her identity in that setting. There's also a piece about male figures in her life and how that shaped her perception of family. Big print with scattered handwriting and lots of collages. Cool, interesting, and important read. (AP)

dkordani@gmail.com

DOODY FACE MAN #2

8 pgs

Truth in naming here, as this comic zine is about a guy whose face is made of doody. It's a short story about a doody-headed/faced dude who shits himself out and back into existence. The subject matter is rather gross/ G.G. ALLIN-level but the art is actually quite good. (JD)

missionminicomix.com / minicomix@gmailcom

DREAMS OF DONUTS #22

$3 / 64 pgs

Heather's long running comic perzine/diary is not one to miss. Setting the story with her grandmother's prediction of bad things coming in threes, Heather is dumped, projectile vomits in public, and then gets the flu. She takes some time to reflect on her relationship and then gets to go on a West Coast tour with her friends the Crude Studs. Shows, bands, hot tubs, and tacos are all beautifully illustrated in cursive font and surrealist punk aesthetic full of metaphorical and literal portrayals. (AP)

all4choice@hotmail.com

FEEDBACK #14

$4 / 32 pgs

The cover tells it—this is the last (or at least penultimate) issue of *Feedback*. Parenting and full-time teaching have bitten heavily into John's show-going, so he'll be switching from reviewing bands to long-form comics. Here you get 18 pages of typically six-panel show reviews, focusing more on the bands and not so much extraneous encounters, weird people, etc. He reprints a number of flyers and adds a few pages of vinyl reviews. He saw a fair variety of bands and is descriptive, not critical, though the vinyl he covers is mostly metal and wilder bar rock. He thinks $4 is a lot for the zine but copying expenses drove him to it. I can't say *Feedback* is my new favorite, but who'd say anything bad about punk (etc.) show comics? Not me. (JM)

John Isaacson, Box 153, 5142 Hollister Ave, Santa Barbara, CA 93111 / feedbackcomics.blogspot.com

FLUKE #12
$5 / 76 pgs

I'm told *Fluke* is a punk zine that puts out something different every issue. This one is a 76 page autobiographical comic by Bobby Madness about his days on Loisaida Ave. and around in New York in the early '80s. It's about him and his friend Chris when he was fifteen, and about being a young punk. In the first scene he tries dope and pukes (a common reaction) and then sticks to liquor and weed for the rest of the story. There's stuff in it about him painting graff, getting into random fights, meeting weirdos, going to shows, meeting Johnny Ramone and annoying him. He covers shows he saw—the Cramps, Ramones, and Stiff Little Fingers. He reflects on his lifestyle and anti-social behavior, saying Loisaida was a punk utopia. Even though a lot of the characters complain about what a dump NYC is at that time in the story, it sounds a helluva lot better than the gentrification all urban areas are afflicted with now. Guess you don't know what you got til it's gone. It's only $5 for a lot of comic that's a historical account of punk culture, written by someone who was clearly there and lived that life. You should get it or read it if you're into punk, comix and zines.

I first remember coming across Bobby Madness's zine *Mad Soul #3* at Mission Records in SF in the late '90s, next to my own angsty auto-bio punk comic. His was a goddamn dollar! It was a full-sized comic with influences (I'm guessing) from S. Clay, Spain Rodriguez and Rat Fink hot rod type art, and graff. Just bangin'! I thought, "Here's a guy doing this just like me, not even trying to come up that hard, given the price for how much work this is. Humble." It was a mystery for years. The art in *Mad Soul #3* was better, but Loisaida is about telling a longer story and getting it off his chest or something. He's one of *the* punk cartoonists, along with Fly and maybe that guy KAZ. There's never been that many punk visual artists (or cartoonists), compared to musicians in the scene, at least out here in the Bay. Nowadays there are lots more, since we're generations deep in punk now, some of whom I don't even know that much about yet. Bobby Madness was one of the first, from old school punk, and his stuff reflects that mentality still. His stuff isn't all that PC, if that's a selling point or turn off to you punks out there. He's been putting in work for a long time, but hardly promotes his own stuff, which seems to be mostly published and distributed by Tim Goodyear. (MR)

PO Box 1547, Phoenix, AZ 85001 / flukezine@gmail.com

JUST SAY YO #6
62 pgs

Zinesters: literally no one cares that or why it's been a while since your last issue, especially when said statement is accompanied by a layout that includes three LL Cool Js smiling/hard stancing at me. He doesn't even have three tracks. But enough digression. If you're a fan of Cheap Girls, Nothing, Rocky Votolato (spoiler alert: there is nothing about *The Edge of Quarrel* in this interview), or Self-Defense Family (ex-Horror Show), or if you want to read about what the band Sport did on tour, then this is worth picking up. The mostly common thread seems to be that except for Cheap Girls, these are bands who come from the hardcore-removed-from-punk world that are doing different styles now, and with whom the author seems to have a personal connection. The layout is unnecessarily busy at the beginning, but stark and appropriate later on, and overall has good elements of both cut-and-paste and computer generated elements. (DG)

144 Svenue du Maréchal de Saxe, 69003, Lyon, FRANCE / just.say.yo.zine@gmail.com

KAFFI FANZINE Vol. 5
$7.36 ppd, trades OK / 24 pgs

Interesting Norsk zine covering black metal musicians like Frost (of 1349 & Satyricon) and more—much more! From my minimal understanding of Norwegian this seems to cover his inspirations and various records he's played on. And true to this zine's name, they ask him what his favorite coffee ("kaffi") is. Norsk pagan/black metallers, Kampfar are in here, covering some of the early extreme metal scene in the town of Notodden. I loved the raw, handwritten text around the interview, which also seems to say something about chocolate cake ("sjokoladekake"). An Oslo Hardcore band called Freedumb is interviewed about what seems to be their recent releases. Plus, there's a Bay Area hardcore/skate punk band I've never heard of in here called Bad Shit. I 'spose Bad Shit has some kinda following as they're already done a bunch of Thrasher mag/Monster Energy drek/Vans sponsored shows/tours. Other stuff in here: some cool, short comics about metal shows and a short interview with Roblake, a tattoo artist from Kopenhavn, Danmark…er…Denmark. (JD)

c/o Havgaland Kunstverk, Strandgaten, 178, 5525 Hausesund NORWAY / kaffifanzine.com / kaffifanzine@gmail.com

KAFFI FANZINE Vol. 6
$7.36 ppd, trades OK / 24 pgs

This time around Kaffi has a color print and it looks really good. The first part of this is sorta like *MRR*'s "What's the Scoop?" where they ask people in Bergen (the second biggest city in Norway and home to giant troll statues among other things) what their favorite coffee is. There's even more *kaffi*/coffee and chocolate cake with a short write-up & photos of fashion blogger (?!?) Lene Tønnessen. This leads into a series of comic-based interviews with the noise/sludge weirdo band Årabrot—which reminds me, I missed their only Bay Area gig at The Eagle! *Blodig helvete*! Anyway, Oslo tattoo artist Jimmy Duval is also interviewed and the color prints work really well in showing his art. Since my Norwegian language is limited I can only understand maybe about one third of the text. Tattoo artist and album cover artist Trine Grimm is also featured in an interview with some neat lookin' handwritten text and drawings in the margins. Their music reviews section, while small, covers a good amount of current stuff from the excellent Haust, as well as Noxgat and Sleaford Mods. A few of these reviews are in English. Additionally, there's a profile on *Gatekunst* ("Street art") zine. Plus, there's a talk with the US skateboard company FOS. I generally don't know much about skateboarding but this interview was pretty cool and looks neat with scribbled graphics underneath. Even better was the profile of three of the girls behind Jente Skate ("Girls Skate"). Jente Skate helps promote girls in skateboarding around Norway. Back to the tattoo scene and we have Uncle A from Berlin. His interview is pretty good but I'm not crazy about his skull and roses designs. Lastly, there's a profile of *Gatekampen* ("Street Fight") zine. I look forward to reading more of this—ideally when my eyes can read small print better and I'm more fluent in Norsk. (JD)

c/o Havgaland Kunstverk, Strandgaten, 178, 5525 Hausesund NORWAY / kaffifanzine.com / kaffifanzine@gmail.com

MURBER #3
$6.50 / 40 pgs

This issue focuses mostly on the origins of 1919 Hemphill, the Fort Worth DIY space, and the author's involvement with booking shows, going to meetings, cleaning up after all the bullshit is done, dealing with parents, cops, local thugs, shitty neighbors, and all the other fucked up things we all know too well that are necessary to keep the doors open at a venue. There are some cool comics splattered throughout, and a pretty touching story about a local character who seemed to have been loved by all the volunteers and regular visitors of the space. The author admits repeatedly, and it seemed obvious, anyway, that he felt he never got the recognition he deserved for his hard work at a DIY, collectively-run space. Is this still shocking to people? (DZ)

1423 Lincoln St, Bloomington, IN 47401 / itsmerickv@gmail.com

THEE NATIONAL TEENSET OUTSIDER #31
$1 / 34 pgs

This tiny and dense zine is full of opinions and rants on various pop culture things, from the death of Spock, to ghost pepper fries and bear wrestling. It seems like maybe it could be good or alright but it's not. It's thirty-four pages of inside jokes, snarky badassery; I don't get it. (MM)

W. Carroll, 32 Edmonds St #1, Rochester, NY 14607

NO GODS NO MATTRESS #25

$3-5 / 90 pgs

In another installment of this prolific East Bay staple, Enola takes us to the past with stories of people who aren't really in their life anymore. Some stories are funny and others sad, but all are written in Enola's signature style—whimsical and otherworldly vernacular and a messy DIY layout sprinkled with drawings—that is surprisingly easy to navigate. Also in this zine is a really honest and insightful piece about how Enola became politicized while living in the East Bay and how they navigate themselves in this place. And it's not in a preachy academic white person way either—it's real and personal and humbling. At 90 pages this is more like a novel than a zine and took me a minute to read. If you haven't already read this zine I feel bad for you. (AP)

PO Box 3936 Berkeley, CA 94703

PHANTOM POWER

$3 / 64 pgs

Interviews with gender marginalized people in punk, mostly in Portland, talking about their experiences around making music and being in bands, struggles they've had personally or in the punk community and how they deal with it, as well as advice they would give to people in the same position. Give this to some tender child you know that can't make it to rock camp. (AP)

4934 N Vancouver Ave Portland, OR 97217 / hypnophobiaradio@gmail.com

RAZORCAKE #87

$4 / 112 pgs

Razorcake exists in a world where *after the gig* one can "leave the show with a sing-along on your breath and it seems like the stars shine a little brighter." This is a world I no longer live in, but one that deserves to be covered for everyone who isn't such a bitter fucker. The publication has a lot in common with the one you're reading now. If you've read this far, you may know they do things a little differently. Some of the differences are obvious: page numbers, glossy cover, top fives instead of top tens, "The Dinghole Reports," etc. Some differences are kind kind of subtle. Would *MRR* ever publish a two-page column about fucking on top of a pinball machine with *no paragraph breaks??* I guess that's not up to me. Some differences bug me a bit less; their interview style for instance, it is a bit more *conversational* maybe. Some of their interviewers actually bring the band's lyrics in with them, which is a good look we should maybe adopt on this side of California. This issue seems pretty west coast oriented, featuring Los Angeles's Benny the Jet Rodriguez, ex-Truman's Water psychlords Octagrape, Seattle's Listen Lady, San Francisco's Western Addiction, and Portland's Divers. I try to keep my ear to the ground as much as I can, but this is my first time engaging with a lot of these bands, and I appreciate the introduction. I feel like *Razorcake* is an exceptionally gracious host taking me into a party where I don't know anybody or feel like shaking anybody's hand. Show me to the wet bar. (EW)

razorcake.org

RESIST #48

$6 / 80 pgs

Biking throughout the winter can suck. Maybe not here in San Francisco, but in most other parts of the U.S., even in Florida, it can really suck. You wanna know where it's *really* fucking sucky to be super determined to ride your bike all winter long? Minnesota, that's where. Aptly sub-sub-titled "A Winter Cycling Journal," that's exactly what you get. The author Mat rides his bike—almost defiantly— every day throughout the brutal as fuck Minneapolis winter in the face of old man winter, his age, and sometimes right up against common sense itself. For work, general hangs, errands and whatever else needs to be done. At times, it feels like the point has been driven home a few times too many. It's *cold*, bikes break, and you have to decide every day if it's worth it to fix whatever problem has arisen mid-ride—forgot to button one thing and now your stomach is freezing, back brakes stopped working, glove fell off, hat stopped covering your head, etc.—or just hurry up and get to where you got to be and warm up there and fix it then. Get this and either be super happy that you don't ever have to slag through half a foot of snow for half a year to get to work to pay the bills or be super proud that you are part of an elite crew able to do that shit...or both! (DZ)

P.O. Box 582345, Minneapolis, MN 55458

RUIN VALUE

52 pgs

A man ventures far from the security of New York City's failed squats of Occupy to retrace ancient European footprints. Ah! The travel narrative! HISTORY! POLITICS! VOYEURISM! LOW KEY JOURNALISM! This guy's good at stringing words together and seems like he can report on the facts he takes in pretty well. He refers to a famous sad guy as a "fellow ultraleftist." This is to make you believe they have a conspiratorial affinity, which could be troubling depending on how much you care about Walter Benjamin and any perceived legacy or purity of reputation of being more of a girl thing. He finishes up the job with a letter penned by some freak tripping balls throughout an eviction. It's all very quaint and leaves you feeling…like… something's…wrong….But what is to be done? (EC)

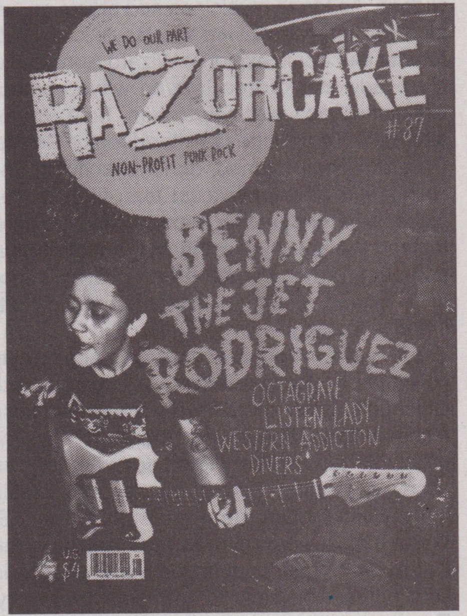
agittlitz@gmail.com

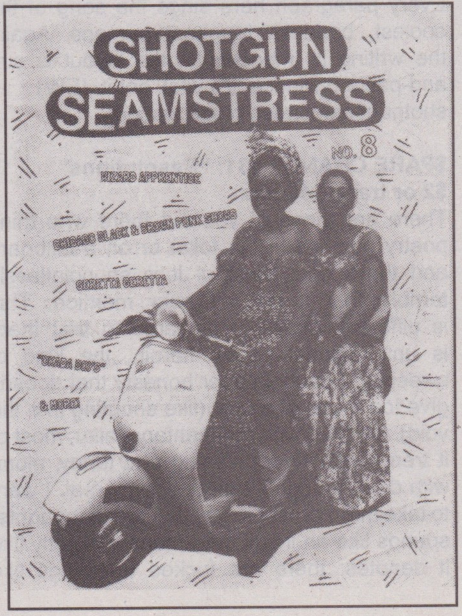
SHOTGUN SEAMSTRESS #8

$5.50 / 40 pgs

I'm a piece of garbage and unfit to review (I almost spelled "review" as "revue" just now) the genius contained in issue #8 of Osa Atoe's *Shotgun Seamstress*, but I'll give it my best shot. Osa's prose is crystalline precision, and

DREAMS OF DONUTS
#22





I have no chance of summarizing this zine in my wretchedly shitty writing. If you didn't know already, *Shotgun Seamstress* is "by, for and about Black punks, queers, feminists, outsider artists and musicians." One of the many questions I've asked myself in poring over the anthology of issues 1-6 (released on Mend My Dress Press and sold out): White culture, and in particular music, has done its share of "borrowing" and appropriation; what can Black artists gain in taking back from purportedly white subcultures? Of course Black musicians and artists have been instrumental in punk music and culture throughout history, but are pushed to the margins way too often in the telling of that history. This zine examines the edge of the subculture, what gets defined as punk and how.

It's certainly about way more than punk, but lot of the subjects in this issue stand right at the edge of what is perceived as such. Issue #8 opens with an essay on "Okada Boys," imagining the formation of a subculture around the motorcycle-taxi drivers of urban Nigeria. As far as musicians and artists go, we also get interviews with the Bay's own Afro-futurist electronic explorist Wizard Apprentice, Marc Edwards of free jazz/no wave combos Cellular Chaos and Slipstream Time Travel, and Italo-horror actress/writer/director Geretta Geretta. Their stories don't exactly fit the classic narrative of outcast teen finding their place in a community among other misfits. Instead we see punk as a skill and technical approach (among many others), an influence to be tapped, a moment in time along a greater creative journey.

There is a lot in here to encourage transforming your space, your narrative: an interview with Chicago's Black and Brown punk shows (also available in *MRR* #384; had to plug it), a review of the Martha P. Washington documentary, an essay on Walter Scott's murder and media portrayals of black life and death in the US. When mainstream culture writes you out of the history and projects only death and silence in your future, you have to craft your own story. Every paragraph here sings the song of the coolest, baddest, toughest humans. Again, the writing is impeccable, the layout is cut-and-paste brilliance, it's vital, get it. (EW)
shotgunseamstress.blogspot.com

$PARE CHANGE #31: "Resolutions"
$2 or trade / 40 pgs

There are those of you out there who think poetry belongs in the toilet or on a billboard and that's fine. Most of it is so pointlessly terrible that it doesn't bear mention. This is different, okay? I am arguing that there is unintentional poetry herein, the kind of sweeping beauty in utter honesty that doesn't give too much of a fuck (like shouting into the void). It's filled with rudimentary haiku, most of it tremendously depressing and funny, along with deep thoughts that are really real. I want to take this moment to say that "deep thoughts" sounds like an insult but I mean it exactly like it denotes; there are fucked up things like suicide and alcoholism and everyday pain (not everyday as in ordinary, everyday like fucking bludgeoning and interminable) and this writer cleaned the pool for you, so dive in. I hate that I relate to it all so much, but it's 2015 and this guy described social media as if to an alien. Also please disregard the mime on the cover—it's a mime and not a juggalo—even if it were either of those things it's fine because this is quality writing packaged like junk mail. (JB)
Rev. Thomas Foote, PO Box 6023, Chattanooga, TN 37401

STAYING IN
Free / 20 pgs

The Summer 2015 issue starts out with describing a fun idea, an attempt to sample six different ice cream shops in one day in Jersey. Sounds like an awesome fucking day! There's a weird page that merely states the handful of shows the author saw one week; a super condensed history of local boys who hit it big, the Manhattans, which was pretty sweet; and a top 20 list of "post-*Dookie* pop punk" albums, which, if you're a pop punk fan already, didn't seem incredibly informative. As I think I've mentioned in earlier reviews of this zine (I'm not going to go through my old shitty notes and cross reference my exact wording), it just doesn't seem descriptive enough. The author ate a bunch of ice cream, went to some shows, and likes pop punk. Hey, I was kinda stoked on that Manhattans piece and have been listening to some old soul for a few days now, so kudos for that. Definitely getting a lot better with each attempt and it's a good quick read. And hey, it's free to boot! (DZ)
stayinginzine@gmail.com

SWAGGER DOLPHINS
28 pgs

Group zines are hard work. Especially so when they are loaded with criticisms and personal opinions. The reviewer's job is to compel the reader to engage with the media without betraying its full content. Ms. Osa's Literary Art Summer Camp Class approached this challenge full speed with nary a regret. *Swagger Dolphins* is a full-sized full color review zine that is all about love. Every fourth grader contributed a page (or a few) on a topic they feel strongly about. This issue seems to focus on cultural figures of import. It has an ambitious breadth, covering everything from sports stars (professional wrestling included), to *What Is Youtube?!*, to cartoons that shape these young lives. It's hard to say how much experience these young people have in the world of publishing but if this is indeed a first effort I'm very impressed. *Swagger Dolphins* isn't just for the cerebral either. It's generously sized handwritten type and colorful illustrations could stand alone. This is a great mag! (EC)
communityworksla.org

TOINEN VAIHTOEHTO #254
32 pgs

With the nice paper, stark, clean layout, and great photo reproduction, *Toinen Vaihtoehto* is one of the nicest looking zines we get. The sweet pictures this time are Finnish punks at the beach. Uhrit and Kovaa Rasvaa report on their (separate) Brazilian tours, while Escapist and Litovsk played a few shows in Spain and France. The reviews include the book *Reach Out: Photos From The Helsinki Punk/HC Underground 2008-2012*, along with plenty of music and zine write-ups. Long words printed small. (JM)
PL 1, 65200 Vaasa, Finland / tv@punkinfinland.net

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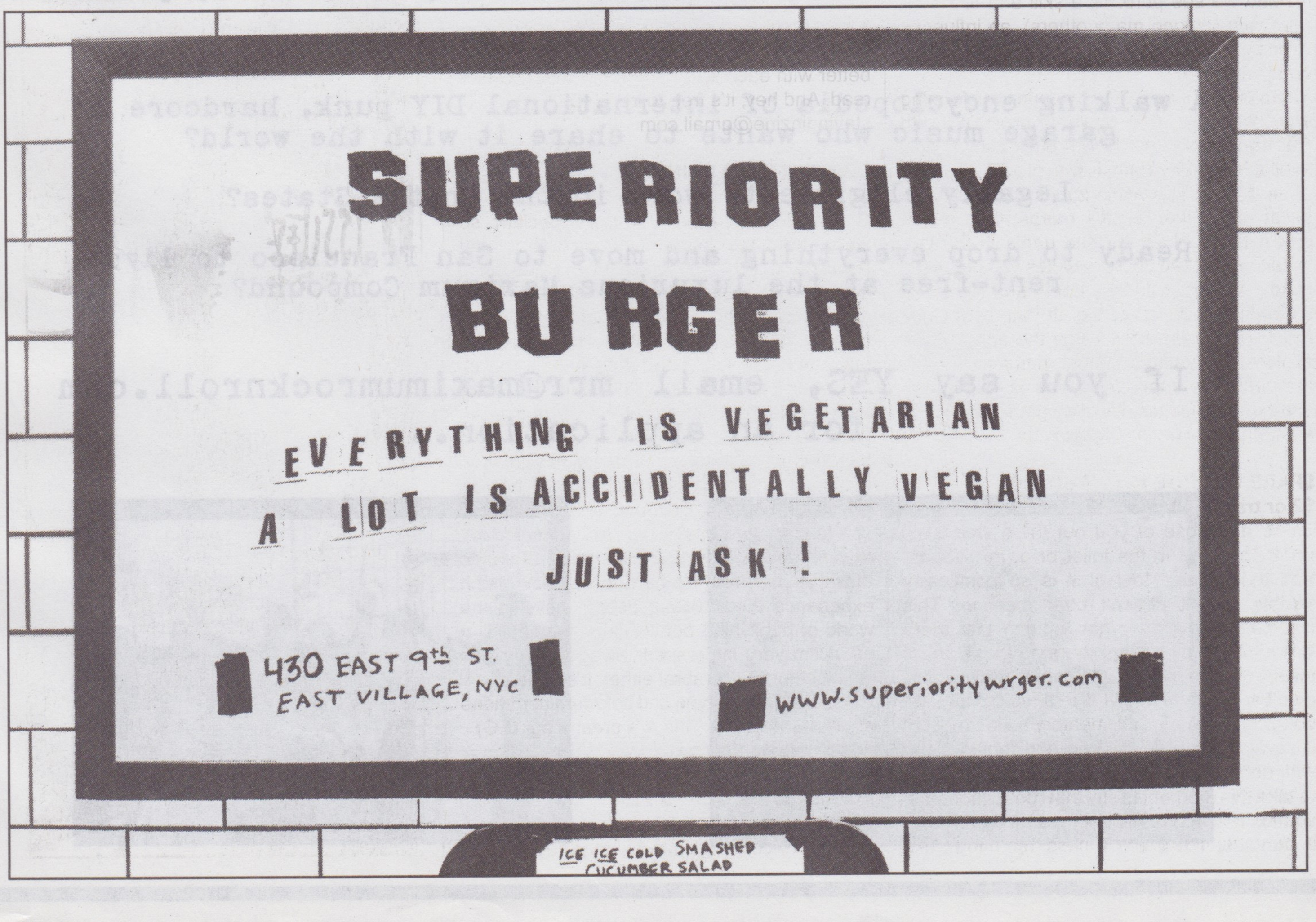

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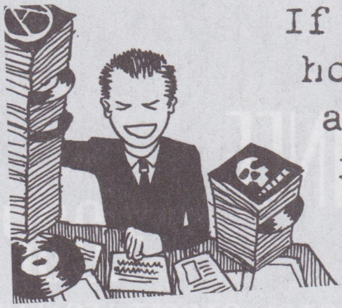

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